Resource Materials

Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation

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4 May 1988

Dear Friends,

Greetings from Geneva!

The enclosed resource materials directly address the call of the Vancouver Assembly to engage in a conciliar process of mutual commitment (covenant) for justice, peace and the integrity of creation.

3.1 In his paper, "Conciliar Fellowship and Councils - Churches on their Way to a Universal Council", Lukas Vischer cuts through the debris of ecumenical wranglings on the subject to a clear exposition of the faith and order aspect of the Vancouver call, namely, how can we envisage a universal council of the churches in the present situation of divided churches? The paper is also available, on request, in German. We recommend that you also read the article of D. Preman Niles, "Covenanting for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation - an Ecumenical Survey" (The Ecumenical Review vol. 39 no. 4, October 1987, 470-84, which traces the history and explains the thrust of the Vancouver call.

Three discussion papers follows:

3.2 "Integrity of Creation - an Ecumenical Discussion"

3.3. "The Ecumenical Movement and the Concept of Justice"

3.4 "The Ecumenical Movement and Peace Positions"

These papers bring together a spectrum of ecumenical positions and insights in our effort to encourage further exploration. None of them is a position paper. These will come later. Rather, their intention is to engage churches and Christians in the continuing study and debate.

Of the three papers the Integrity of Creation is possibly the easiest to follow. The inter-connectedness of the three areas - justice, peace and the integrity of creation - is implied. It also asks whether theological priority should be given to creation and that respecting and maintaining the inter-relationships within creation is the practice of justice, and the outcome of such practice is peace.

The paper on justice is probably the most difficult to grasp. It presents gropings towards an ecumenical understanding of justice from various perspectives rather than clear articulations on what "justice" means. There are two main reasons for this. First, ecumenical social thought is not based on an agreed body of social teachings as in the Roman Catholic Church, but is rather a response to changing historical situations. There are therefore differences in interpreting that history - a fact that becomes clear when one compares Konrad Raiser "From Stockholm 1925 to 1990 - the History of Social Thought" (Catalysing Hope for Justice, ed. Wolfgang R. Schmidt, WCC & CCA 1987, 50-57) and Paul Abrecht "From Oxford to Vancouver: Lessons from Fifty Years of Ecumenical Work for Economic and Social Justice" (The Ecumenical Review vol. 40 no. 2, April 1988, 147-68) Nevertheless, the justice paper does indicate certain positions, however debatable they may be: (a) one may not understand the meaning of justice except from the perspective of those who face injustice and are struggling for justice; (b) justice is freedom from oppression but not isolation or independence from the human community which is neither possible nor just. Rather, justice is awareness of the authentic interdependence of people and of people with their natural environment; (c) justice is the historical expression of God's love.

The paper on peace deals more explicitly with global issues - arms race, nuclear weaponry, militarism - and links these with the issues of justice and the integrity of creation. Implicit in this paper is the conviction that the escalating arms race with its ideology of national security is leading the world to the brink of a nuclear holocaust. True peace may require the willingness to take risks in trust.

All these papers represent the first stage in making a theological affirmation on justice, peace and the integrity of creation and in working towards agreed positions on them. We ask for your comments and responses as you test these in your situations.

3.5 In the previous sets of resource materials we included a form of worship for "A World Day of Prayer for a Free Namibia" that commemorates the Kassinga massacre of 4 May 1978. The present set is being put together on 4 May 1988 and we have included the message of the General Secretary of the Namibian Council of Churches. This powerful statement serves to contextualize our intellectual wrestlings with justice, peace and the integrity of creation.

3.6 Three Bible study outlines on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation.

We regret that we are unable to produce the JPIC Resource Materials in larger quantities and in other languages. Our resources of staff time and finances are limited. We encourage you to translate, adapt and reproduce these materials for wider use, and ask that you mention the source. These resources are for your use as you continue your work for justice, peace and the integrity of creation.

Yours in Christ

Carlos A. Sintado
Executive Secretary
for Development Education

D. Preman Niles
Programme Director
Justice, Peace and
the Integrity of Creation

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Yours in Christ

Carlos A. Sinasac
Executive Secretary
for Development Education
Programme Director
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Resource Materials 3.1

CONCILIAR FELLOWSHIP AND COUNCILS
Churches on their Way to a Universal Council - some Observations

Lukas Vischer

The terms 'conciliar' and 'council' have once again become a focus for ecumencial discussion. At the Vancouver Assembly (1983), the World Council of Churches called on the churches to join in 'a conciliar process of mutual commitment (covenant) to justice, peace and the integrity of creation'. The German Evangelical Kirchentag in Düsseldorf (1985) proposed that the churches should assemble in a 'council' and express a clear word for peace. What does 'conciliar' mean here? What is meant by a 'council'?

As they stand, neither of these words is clear. In particular, the terms in the call of the World Council of Churches' to the churches present problems. In this call, several terms - 'conciliar', 'process', 'mutual commitment', 'convenant' - are strung together without any clear indication of how they are related to one another. 'Conciliar' makes us think of a 'council', but the World Council of Churches speaks of 'a process of mutual commitment'. What might that mean? Is a council necessary for such a process? But if a council is necessary, why is the process called 'conciliar'? Far from clarifying the intention, the addition of the word 'covenant' in brackets only makes the call to the churches all the more confusing. Obviously, what is meant is that the conciliar process of mutual commtiment can equally well be called a covenant. In which case, the question arises, "in what sense is the word 'covenant' used here?" In short, while on first hearing the Vancouver call is appealing, a closer look raises a whole series of questions requiring further clarification.

The proposal of the German Evangelical Kirchentag also presents difficulties. Here the term 'council' is used to indicate clearly the assembling of the churches in an official and authoritative way. But why choose the word 'council' for this purpose? What does this term mean precisely? Or, to put the question differently, has anything of the original content of the proposal been lost by the fact that the term has now been abandoned and replaced by a more neutral term, 'convocation'?

It is difficult to avoid the suspicion that the terms 'conciliar' and 'council' are used in both cases without precision. Their use is intended to stress the fact that what is being proposed is a new departure. The churches are not to rest content with earlier and already tried models of joint witness but prepare themselves for a qualitatively new form of solidarity. While the use of both terms may be deliberate, they, however, lack precision. Nevertheless, the intention of the call is not to get into the tangle of different confessional interpretations, but rather to cut through them and to set the churches moving beyond them. The intention may be that clarification is to come on the way, in via.

But it is precisely here that the difficulty lies. The terms 'conciliar' and 'council' have deep roots in the Church's tradition. They bring with them already existing connotations and cannot be used, therefore, in an imprecise way. They conjure up different ideas in the various churches, ideas already shaped by the respective confessional traditions. When used in an ecumenical discussion they almost inevitably awaken the suspicion that they are being used in a sense which is foreign to one's own tradition. It is necessary, therefore, to take account of the history of these terms and the different interpretations they carry in the various confessional traditions. Only when agreement has been reached here will the way into the future be opened up. As long as these terms are used in abstraction from their historical origin, they will only provoke misunderstandings and the real purpose of the Vancouver proposal will be lost in fruitless debates. However, if the terms are used creatively in the light of the meaning they have acquired in history, a new prospect could well open up for the churches. My observations and reflections are an attempt in this direction.

1. Three preliminary remarks

a) The question as to how far the ecumenical movement is itself to be understood as a joint preparation for a universal council has been a concern of the World Council of Churches. The study of this question was undertaken by the Faith and Order Commission. Immediately following the World Conference on Church and Society in 1966, a small group of theologians met to study the possible significance of the councils of the ancient Church as a model for the contemporary ecumenical movement. The upshot of the discussion was that a certain affinity does indeed exist between the conciliar practice of the ancient Church and the contemporary ecumenical movement. The joint preparation for a universal council could be regarded as the goal of the ecumenical movement. The idea was picked up by the Uppsala Assembly in 1968: 'The ecumenical movement helps to enlarge the experience of universality and its regional councils and the World Council of Churches may be regarded as a transitional opportunity for eventually actualizing a truly universal, ecumenical and conciliar form of common life and witness. The members of the World Council of Churches, committed to each other, should work for the time when a genuinely universal council may once more speak for all Christians and lead the way into the future' (Uppsala, Sect. I,19). The debate was stimulated by this decision. The theme was discussed at the Canterbury meeting of the Central Committee of the WCC in 1969 and pursued further in subsequent years

in the Faith and Order Commission (Louvain 1971, Salamanca 1973). In these discussions the description gradually emerged of 'the unity we seek', and this was officially endorsed at the Nairobi Assembly of the WCC in 1975. The Church is to be understood as a conciliar fellowship of local churches which are themselves truly united. In this conciliar fellowship, each local church has full catholicity along with all the others; it confesses the same apostolic faith and therefore recognizes the others as members of the same Church of Christ which are led by the same God. As the New Delhi Assembly declared, they belong together because they have received the same baptism and celebrate the same eucharist; they recognize the members and ministries of the other local churches. They are one in their mission to bear witness to the Gospel of Christ in their preaching and ministry in the world and to the world. To this end, each church aims at maintaining sustained and sustaining relationships with her sister churches, and to give expression to these relationships in conciliar gatherings whenever required for the fulfilment of their common calling (Nairobi, Sect. II, 3).

Now that the significance of the conciliar tradition for the ecumenical movement is once again being considered, these earlier studies and conclusions should not be forgotten. Because of its short memory, the ecumenical movement all too often tends to ignore well-trodden paths!

b) Discussion of this theme has always been hampered by a difficulty of language. The English word 'council' is ambiguous. It not only can denote a council in the strict sense but also can mean a more informal gathering of churches. In German and French, a distinction can be made by using two different words: Konzil and Rat, concile and conseil. In English, only the one word is available. If the discussion of the theme is conducted in English (as is usually the case), it is often not clear whether the word 'council' refers to the conciliar assembly which speaks and decides with authority or to the provisional gathering of churches who are not yet able to declare themselves in full communion. In this respect, even the proposal of the Vancouver Assembly is not immediately clear. In which sense is the term 'conciliar' used here? Only with the translation into German and French is it clear that the reference is to a conciliar assembly which speaks and decides authoritatively on behalf of the churches.

c) The call of the Vancouver Assembly to churches, to commit themselves to 'justice, peace and the integrity of creation', conjures up the vision of a Church bearing a clear and committed witness in society. In a real sense, the two ecumenical movements of 'Faith and Order' and 'Life and Work' are united in this proposal. On the one hand, the churches are to make room for a new quality of fellowship among themselves and, on the other hand, they are to work together for justice, peace and the integrity of creation. The World Council of Churches has repeatedly formulated overall objectives for the commitment of the churches in society. The keynote in the period following the Amsterdam Assembly (1948) was 'the responsible society'. In the years following the Nairobi Assembly (1975), the emphasis was on working for 'a just, participatory and sustainable society'. The Vancouver Assembly (1983) focussed attention on the watchwords 'justice', 'peace' and 'the integrity of creation'. There is a clear shift of emphasis here. The task of averting the danger of self-destruction in a nuclear holocaust assumes greater urgency today than ever before. But the novelty of the Vancouver summons lies elsewhere. It combines the call to unity with the call to commitment in society. It speaks of a process of mutual commitment which takes precedence

over or at least must be combined with the commitment in society. Without this new quality of fellowship, there will be no real witness either! The Church's task is not simply to point out the values which are vital for the healthy ordering of society. The Church's witness consists primarily in being itself a committed fellowship and, as such, at the service of the society in which it lives.

The Vancouver proposal could therefore become an opportunity to overcome at last the old tension between the goals of the two movements, Faith and Order, Life and Work. This makes it all the more deplorable that it should have become customary to refer to the programme inspired by the Vancouver proposal simply by its initial 'JPIC'. Quite apart from the ugliness of such abbreviations (the use 'BEM' for the Lima documents on 'Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry' is another example), to use the label 'JPIC' for the programme suggests inevitably that what it involves is merely a modification of the goals previously set for the churches' commitment in society. Instead of 'JPSS', it is now 'JPIC'! The really important new emphasis is thus lost from sight

2. Conciliarity, Conciliar Fellowship, Councils

What does church tradition tell us of the nature of councils? The really basic point here is the fact that the Church has always held representative assemblies at which vital issues have been discussed. Stretching from earliest times right down to our own day, there have been a whole series of meetings, councils, synods, assemblies and suchlike gatherings. The label is not always the same but what remains constant in all periods is the need to come together in representative assemblies. The first known example, perhaps, is the Jerusalem council of the apostles (Acts 15). In Antioch, Paul was confronted with a conflict which threatened both the preaching of the Gospel and the unity of the Church. He decided to bring the issue before Peter and James in Jerusalem. In a discussion in which not just the elders but the whole community participated, a consensus was hammered out and communicated to the congregations. It may be objected that this Jerusalem meeting was not a council, strictly speaking, and it did indeed differ in many respects from the regional and ecumenical councils of the later Church. Nevertheless, within the setting of that early period, it was a representative assembly. It came about as a response to a crisis and it helped to maintain the integrity of the Gospel and to ward off a threatened division in the Church.

In the course of the centuries, councils have repeatedly been held for this purpose. Whenever the Church is alive, it is clearly impelled from within to meet, to exchange experiences, to take decisions and to proclaim the truth as a community. Historians of religion have pointed out (I believe, correctly) that the convocation of councils is a typical feature of the Christian tradition. The need to hold representative assemblies through which to speak and act has not been felt to anything like the same extent in the other main religious traditions. In recent times, to be sure, Buddhist 'councils' and Islamic summit meetings have been held, but these do not have the same deep roots in their tradition as the Christian councils.

For this inner compulsion of the Church, the Faith and Order study employed the term 'conciliarity'. While this term is not derived directly from the

biblical witness, it does nevertheless bring out clearly a real element recognizable both in the biblical witness and in the history of the Church. In order to remain true to its origins and to carry out its mission, the Church needs to meet again and again in assemblies. These are used as instruments by the Holy Spirit whose purpose it is to lead God's children into all truth. These assemblies are not chance events but have their roots in the very nature of the Church. They take place of necessity even if not regularly and predictably.

Is it possible to say why this should be so? It is to be explained by the fact that Jesus Christ entrusted the proclamation of the Gospel to human beings - to the disciples, and, after them, to the Church. He Himself, the Risen Lord, is present in their midst. Ever and afresh, the Holy Spirit discloses the significance of this presence, and the Church is thus faced with the permanent task of understanding what the Spirit has to say to it. The meaning of the Gospel remains the same but needs constantly to be rediscovered. The Church's knowledge is never complete. In new situations, new aspects come to the forefront and need to be grasped, interpreted and translated into experience.

The need for councils is made clear from this task. In order to understand the directives of the Spirit, the Church needs to assemble, to invoke the Holy Spirit, return to the sources, and make room in its midst for the truth through the confrontation of different insights. Councils are therefore an integral part of the Church's journey through history. Just like the assembly for worship, they are an opportunity to gather together under the Word, to clear up obscurities, to renew obedience and to receive anew the mandate of wisdom.

In saying this, a keyword has been introduced: a council is in essence an act of worship. It is characterized by the same basic movement that also characterizes every assembly for worship: assembling, cleansing, hearing, renewing of obedience in the fellowship of the Church, and renewing in mission. Every service of worship is essentially a mini-council and, conversely, every council is, in the final analysis, an act of worship. It is altogether appropriate, therefore, to speak of 'celebrating' a council, and it must be considered as axiomatic that the very heart of a council is the common celebration of the eucharist. In nuce, the deepest essence of the council is already visible in the celebration of the eucharist.

What strikes us at once when we consider the history of the church is the diversity of conciliar events. It is impossible to reduce them all to a single pattern, and it is important to bear this fact constantly in mind. The individual confessional traditions tend to cling to a particular form of 'conciliarity'. On the basis of their historical experience they may be able to adduce good reasons for this and these reasons must, of course, be considered very carefully when an attempt is made to find together the particular form of council which commends itself for our present time. But no tradition can rightly claim that the truth has been transmitted exclusively by one particular model of conciliarity.

To begin with, an important distinction must be made. Representative assemblies can be regular events but also exceptional events. In its life, the Church needs, on the one hand, assemblies and synods which meet at regular intervals according to an established tradition or even in accordance with a

written constitution. The Church needs such assemblies or synods as an instrument for maintaining good order and sometimes also for solving newly emerging problems. But the Church also needs extraordinary assemblies from time to time, assemblies which are held as a response to a crisis in the Church. Only these assemblies are, in the strict sense, 'councils'. Among them are to be reckoned the great councils of the Ancient Church. These were convoked at irregular intervals and at moments when the Church was threatened with disintegration. The same applies also to the reform councils of the 15th century. These proved necessary in order to effect long overdue reforms and in this way to restore an already fractured unity. Other examples could be given from the life of every single church in which, again and again, extraordinary assemblies have been necessary. This tendency has prompted an Orthodox theologian to describe genuine councils, with some justification, as 'Spirit-provoked' events. Without an initiative from a specific quarter, of course, no council ever takes place. The kairos has to be recognized and seized. A council is not something which suddenly happens of itself. It has to be planned and worked for.

In this respect, the use of the term 'conciliar process' is misleading. The word 'process' may suggest that what is involved is an event which takes place independently of human purposes and plans. But if the conciliar future is not to remain a mere pipe dream, practical steps have to be taken to make it a reality. It nevertheless also remains true that a council can only take place when the time has become ripe for it. A council is not simply a plan capable of being envisaged at any moment but something which forces itself on the Church when its time is ripe. It can therefore be properly said that a council is called (convoked), in the final analysis, by the Holy Spirit.

This can be illustrated from a particular episode in the history of the Roman Catholic Church. At the beginning of the 1950s, Pope Pius XII toyed with the idea of convoking a council of the Roman Catholic Church. He appointed a number of commissions to prepare a plan and to test it in every detail. The report which was eventually presented to him made the difficulties of the project quite clear. The Pope was so impressed by this that he dropped the idea. A few years later, Pope John XXIII announced the convocation of a council. He had consulted no one but trusted his own inspiration. Once this step had been ventured, the Second Vatican Council was able to take shape - a movement that even the Pope had not foreseen, could not foresee, at the time when he issued the summons, was able to emerge into view.

Characteristic of councils is their diversity of forms. A few indications will suffice to illustrate this:

a) In the course of church history, councils have been summoned for a wide variety of reasons. The generalization is permissible that a council exists to rally the Church to the truth, to unite it in the truth and to send it out into the world as God's people. The occasion which provokes the convocation has differed in each case. A council can become necessary because of the need to clarify a question of doctrine, because of the need to re-establish a threatened or already broken unity, because of the need for the Church to define its position in some contemporary issue, because of the need to initiate a movement of reform, because the Church's witness is especially required in the face of a political or social crisis in society. The character of the council will in each case be determined by the specific purpose for which it was called. Whereas the task in one council would be to draw a clear

line of demarkation against error, in another council it could be for formulating an agreement and proposing steps in the direction of mutual solidarity. While in one case the emphasis would be on the anathematizing of false doctrine, in another case it could be on the comprehensive largeness of Christ's message. While in one case, the focus of attention would be exclusively or mainly on the inner life of the Church, in another case the discussion could be on its witness in the world.

b) This necessarily implies that councils have different themes. Questions of doctrine and internal discipline may be to the fore. The great councils of the Ancient Church defined doctrine and, on the other hand, established rules for the life of the Church (canones). Councils have dealt with missionary questions. Certain councils bore witness for peace. One thinks, for example, of the conciliar discussions in the medieval period concerning the 'truce of God' and, above all, the effort of the Council of Basel to conduct a dialogue with the Hussite movement.

c) A consideration of the history of councils makes it clear that a distinction can be made between different types of council. It is a great stride from the regional councils of the first centuries to the 'ecumenical' councils summoned by the Emperor and again, from these, to the papal councils of the medieval period. A new type of council comes into view with the reform councils of the 15th century. This new type of council underlies the concept of a universal council characteristic of the Reformation movement, the Counter Reformation Council of Trent and the First Vatican Council which is usually defined as a 'pastoral council'.

d) Finally, the supreme authority and composition of a council are important aspects. Here again, considerable differences exist. Who is authorized to summon a universal council? Who is responsible for organizing it? Is there an authoritative court having a final say? The ecumenical councils were summoned by the Emperor. According to the Roman Catholic Church from the medieval period the right to convoke councils belonges exclusively to the Pope. The reform councils of the 15th century were a challenge to papal authority, weakened by the period of the 'great schism'. The Reformers held that a universal council could be convened by the Emperor. There were differences also in the way authority was exercised during a council. Only gradually did the role of the Pope in the negotiations and discussions develop and grow. One decisive step in this development was undoubtedly the successful transfer of the Council of Basel first to Ferrara and then to Florence. Similar important differences exist in the composition of councils. Even if in all periods the majority of those participating in councils were usually bishops, we encounter notable exceptions. At the ecumenical councils we find other clergy besides bishops. Athanasius obviously participated in the Council of Nicea as a deacon, and the participants in the reform councils of the 15th century were certainly not all bishops.

Against this background we can now put this question: Is a universal council of the churches possible, given the division of the churches? Is it conceivable that the long series of conciliar assemblies will one day lead to a 'genuinely universal council'? Can the ecumenical movement be seen perhaps as the place where the churches, which are still divided, pave the way together for a council which permits them to 'speak for all Christians and

lead the way into the future'? The answer to these questions will certainly have to be NO, if we assume a fixed conception of 'conciliar assembly'. If it is assumed, for example, that a universal council must be convoked by the Pope, that it can consist only of bishops and at all stages in its realization be subject to the authority of the Pope with its characteristic claim to infallibility, then it will hardly be possible for the churches to unite. But if, on the contrary, room is allowed for the possibility of a new model of council, it could well be that the divided churches might find a way together in the ecumenical movement. It could be that the history of councils might be enriched by a new period.

The hope of a universal council has frequently been voiced in the ecumenical movement. One of the first to voice this hope was the Reformed theologian Philip Schaff (1809-1893). Born at Chur in Switzerland, Schaff responded to a call to North America and spent the rest of his life as a teacher in various theological colleges. In 1893, shortly before his death, on the occasion of the Parliament of Religions, then meeting in Chicago, he pleaded for a universal council. Similar views were to be frequently heard subsequently. The very fact that Christians of different confessions came together for international ecumenical conferences almost inevitably raised the question whether perhaps a new model of conciliar assembly was not in the process of emerging.

There was, of course, also the opposite view. Is a universal council really a goal worth striving for? Is it realistic to expect the assembling of a council of churches? Councils can err. Surely this view of the Reformers also has to be taken seriously. Can it automatically be assumed that a future council would be used by the Holy Spirit as an instrument? Or could it not be that it would be inspired and led by a different spirit? Could the council not also be an instrument in the hands of the great deceiver?

The outstanding example here, of course, is Vladimir Solovjev (1853-1900). In his 'Short Tale of the Antichrist', he describes the vision of a council of the Antichrist in Jerusalem. Humanity has been plagued by confusions. The longing for agreement in unity has become strong. At this moment, a man with superhuman abilities appears and offers himself to the human race as their leader. He is a man of blameless morality and exceptional gifts, a persuasive writer and an eloquent speaker. He succeeds in uniting the nations. In reality, however, he is the Antichrist. 'Christ was the improver of humanity', he says to himself, 'but I am called to be the benefactor of this partly improved, but partly also incorrigible unimprovable humanity ... Christ brought the sword, but I bring peace ... My judgement will not be a judgement of mere justice, but a judgement of grace. But justice, too, will be in my judgement, but not a forgiving justice, rather a distributive justice...' His calling stems from Satan. He announces it to him in an appearance at night: 'Thou art my beloved son in whom I am well pleased'. The masses celebrate him, especially after he has issued his great manifesto of humanity: 'People of the earth! My peace I give unto you!' But he soon discovers that suspicions are strong in the churches. They are struck by the fact that the superman never speaks of Christ and his Gospel. In order to anticipate all opposition, he summons a great council to Jerusalem. And the Christians of all confessions respond to this summons. To the strains of the new international hymn 'March of the United Humanity' they enter the assembly hall, and the great leader convinces them to unite and accept his programme. Only Pope Peter II, Staretz

Johannes and Professor Pauli, the representatives of the three main confessions resist the temptation and depart from Jerusalem with a few faithful into the wilderness ...

The warning expressed in this vision is one that should not be ignored. It is not enough for the churches in the ecumenical movement to find a way to meet together in a representative assembly or even in a council. What matters most is that the Holy Spirit should also really make use of this assembly. Like everything which Christians undertake in Christ's name, even a Christian council can fail in its real purpose and even be turned into its exact opposite. Every single step must be borne up in prayer that God may be merciful to His frail Church and in the critical moment grant to it His Word.

Are there any criteria for distinguishing between truth and error at a council? Basically there are no more and no less criteria than for any other joint enterprise of the Church. We are not to idealize a council as if it were an event exempted in some miraculous way from the ambiguities of history. As with every other common undertaking, however, it can be sustained by the certainty and the confidence that the Holy Spirit will lead it into all truth. It will constantly pray for the Spirit's guidance. It will make it an unfailing rule to test every utterance and every step in the light of the witness of Scripture. It will not only listen carefully to every single voice from among the participants but also to those on the outer circle, knowing full well that God often makes Himself known in unexpected and not so obvious ways.

One last important observation in this context. The truth of a council becomes evident as the truth when it is tested in the life of the Church over a long period of time. A council is deemed to have really spoken for the Church and acted for the Church when the truth of what it has said is demonstrated in the 'reception' of the Church. Certainly, a council will always aim at making binding statements. But it does not have the truth in its pocket. The council and what it has said are subject to the insight and responsibility of the whole Church. However true it may be that the council meets to represent the Church and to speak in its name, in principle it is nevertheless clear that the Church in its totality is greater than any council. The process of reception makes it clear how far and to what extent a council has really spoken for the Church. In the process of reception truth and error are separated from one another. To be sure, not even the successful reception of a council can be regarded as a conclusive demonstration of its truth. Defects and errors can still emerge even after a long period. But the importance of reception can hardly ever be overestimated.

3. The present state of the ecumenical movement

Even if a universal council of divided churches is in principle within the bounds of possibility, it still leaves unanswered the question as to whether the convocation and organization of a council can be contemplated today or in the near future. Is a 'genuinely ecumenical council' a goal which can only be achieved in some indefinite future? Or can we already begin the preparations for it now?

To be able to answer these questions, it is necessary to reflect on the relationship between 'conciliar fellowship' and 'council'. It is obvious that the churches must live in 'conciliar fellowship' if it is to be possible for a council to be summoned. Only when the churches have drawn so close to one another that they constitute a fellowship that they will be in a position to celebrate a council. Only then can they later receive the jointly produced and authoritatively proposed findings of the council. If there is no one fellowship behind the convocation and organization, there really cannot be any talk of a council.

To be sure full agreement in doctrine and orders are not required for conciliar fellowship. Indeed the reason for the convocation of a council is often the fact that an agreement is threatened or even already broken. Error has slipped into the Church and caused confusion in the minds of people. The division has begun. The council is therefore not simply the expression of an existing unity but rather a measure adopted to maintain or even to restore unity. This was the predominant concern of the Council of Constance (1414-1418). After it had succeeded in eliminating the division that had happened, it called for the regular convocation of councils in a special decree (the decree Frequens of 9th October 1417). The highest expectations were vested in conciliar negotiations. It is declared euphorically there: 'For thereby the tangle, the thorns and thistles of heresy, error and schism, are uprooted, distortions corrected, what is inimical to order reformed and the Lord's vineyard brought to its abundant harvest, whereas the neglect of this remedy leads to the spread and nourishment of all these evils we have mentioned, as the memory of the recent past and the contemplation of the present makes abundantly clear.'

If councils are to fulfil this precise role, however, a solid and resilient common basis is required. The different parties must continue to recognize themselves as one Church and be imbued with the determination to make the unity given in Christ visible. The necessary precondition for a council no longer exists if the churches have finally separated and marked themselves off against each other. Conciliar fellowship presupposes a large enough measure of mutual recognition that in principle the step into unity is possible and a council can in fact be called to have that healing role.

As we have already recalled, the Uppsala Assembly (1986) summoned the churches to work together for a 'genuinely universal council'. The discussion which followed concentrated for a time on the question whether such a assembly was possible and when. Since the entry of the Roman Catholic Church into the World Council of Churches was at that time still under serious consideration, this discussion did not lack a real basis. But it soon became clear that attention should not be fixed merely on the council, but must focus primarily on the quality of the fellowship among the churches in the ecumenical movement. How does the conciliar fellowship come into being? In other words, how is that fellowship among the churches to be achieved - a fellowship which can not only convoke a council but also sustain the process of reception? Even at that time the celebration of a universal council was not the immediate goal. Rather the proposal was a means or a guideline for testing the current ecumenical action of the churches. Encounters, dialogues, common witness and practical cooperation were to assist in helping conciliar fellowship to grow.

This brings us to the question of the condition which must be met to make talk of 'conciliar fellowship' meaningful. The Faith and Order Commission was constantly concerned with this question. As a rule it mentioned the following four conditions:

a) The readiness to recognize one another as churches of Jesus Christ. This includes the explicit formal declaration by the churches that the condemnations and anathemata pronounced against each other in the course of history are no longer applicable. Conciliar fellowship presupposes a readiness for genuine partnership.

b) A declaration making it clear that the churches, for all the differences that characterize them, in fact start from the same apostolic faith as their basis. A council can only be convoked and meet to work if it can be based on a declaration of this kind. This declaration must be recognized by all the participants as a basis for negotiations and decisions.

c) A common understanding of baptism, eucharist and ministry, sufficient to permit the mutual recognition of baptism, the common celebration of the Lord's Supper and the recognition and acceptance of the ministers of all as servants of the Church. A council must be in the position to begin with a common celebration of the Lord's Supper.

d) An explicit agreement as to what is meant by a representative assembly with power to make decisions. How are the individual churches to be represented? Who speaks and decides in their name? Agreement on this is extremely important if the assembly is to be free from constant quarreling.

Clearly these conditions are not met today. To be sure, the churches have made considerable progress. They have drawn closer to one another. They have cleared up many controversial issues, and confirmed broad convergences in doctrine and order. They have begun to worship together on occasion and to bear witness in many spheres. With the founding of the World Council of Churches, they have created a structure which permits them, to some extent at least, to come forward as a fellowship. It is nevertheless quite clear that they are still not a conciliar fellowship. Even the first of these four conditions is only partially met. The churches are still a long way off real partnership.

Do we have to say, then, that a council of churches is still impossible today? The dilemma is clear. If our starting point is the urgency of common witness, the conclusion is plain: a council must be possible. In the face of the threatening dangers, it is impossible to postpone the common witness. The churches must come together now. How can they speak of peace in Christ's name when they are not even able to break down the walls of separation in their own midst? The reminder of the unfinished task of the ecumenical movement takes on the appearance of an evasion in face of this contradiction. It seems to suggest that the churches protect the differences which continue to divide them from one another in order not to have to obey the clear summons of God. And yet the differences exist; they cannot be dismissed simply by minimizing their importance. However much we may long for it, it would surely be an illusion to speak now of a real 'conciliar fellowship'.

How are we to deal with this dilemma? Must the idea of a council be buried? Or are their perspectives which do justice to both horns of the dilemma? Let me present four reflections on this matter:

a) Even if it is an illusion to consider the fellowship attained today as a 'conciliar fellowship', the churches in the ecumenical movement are nevertheless on the way to this goal. They can therefore be described as a 'pre-conciliar fellowship'. They are still not a 'conciliar fellowship' but are aiming at this goal and have already let themselves be governed by it today.

b) Even if the churches today cannot convoke a genuine council, 'pre-council' assemblies are not only possible but even mandatory. If the churches wish to advance on the way to a 'conciliar fellowship', they must deliberately already anticipate something of this goal now. They must, so to speak, 'gain practice' in the conciliar practice of the one Church. It does not matter all that much what label we attach to such an assembly. It can be called a 'conference', a 'convocation', or 'world convocation', but the important thing is that it is meant to be a coming together with the prospect of future conciliar fellowship.

c) Pre-conciliar assemblies of this kind will not make pronouncements on all doctrinal questions but deliberately be limited to certain areas. They will tackle questions which must be addressed for the sake of the Gospel, and about which the churches are able to speak together on the basis of their deepest convictions. They will not ignore or forget the differences which continue to divide them, but, at the same time, make it clear that they are bound together by this common confession in all their differences.

d) A convocation of this kind is a venture of faith. It is impossible to tell in advance the authority it will finally have. It can speak and act with authority but it can also err or indulge in useless generalizations. Its authority depends on the degree to which its utterances conform to the Gospel. It may be that it will very quickly and for good reasons end in oblivion. But it may also be that, in retrospect, it could be seen as having more conciliar character than the churches were prepared to attribute to it at the time it took place.

4. A 'preconciliar' world convocation?

What are the implications of all these for the proposed world assembly for justice, peace and the integrity of creation?

a) It was clear from the reactions of the churches to the Vancouver proposal that the description of the assembly as a 'council' aimed too high. To avoid misunderstandings and needless debates, this term had to be dropped. Is it possible, however, to understand and shape the planned assembly as a 'preconciliar assembly'? The conditions required for this are certainly met. The crying injustice, the increasing danger of a suicidal war, and the threatened destruction of the world of God's creation, all these demand a clear witness on the part of the churches. There is no discernible reason why the churches cannot come together to speak a common, clear and unambiguous word, confessing God and God's gift of life. Such a word could at one and the same time have its basis in the tradition of each individual church and also be the joint responsibility and concern of all churches.

b) The initiative for an assembly of this kind certainly cannot come from any one individual church. It must as far as possible be taken by the churches together. The World Council of Churches is therefore the appropriate body to convoke the assembly. It was founded in order to unite all the churches which confess Jesus Christ as God and Saviour in a provisional fellowship. Its task is constantly to broaden and deepen this fellowship. It is logical, therefore, that it should invite the churches to a world assembly on justice, peace and the integrity of creation. Through a preconciliar convocation of this kind, the World Council of Churches could take one step further towards the goal it seeks. It can thereby help to extend and deepen the fellowship among the churches.

c) How can we ensure that this world convocation really speaks for the churches? Since the conditions for a conciliar fellowship today are not yet fulfilled, the authority to decide continues to remain with the churches. Any attempt to claim authority for the world convocation as such will certainly meet with resistance. The churches have very different ideas about the way authoritative and binding decisions can be reached in the Church; and therefore it is hardly conceivable at this juncture that they would assign the authority to make decisions to the world convocation. But is there not then a danger that the world convocation will limit itself to statements of the obvious, out of fear that there will be opposition from the churches? Limit itself to a few generalizations lacking any punch or bite and therefore offending no one? How is this danger to be circumvented? As a general rule, it may be said in reply that the world convocation should not so much decide itself as take up and pass corporately what the individual churches have already decided. It will be important, therefore, for the churches to state their convictions already in the preparatory stage. They have to reach agreement on the themes which must be discussed at the world convocation. At special small conferences they must establish the main outlines of an agreement as to how far they are willing and able to go in the area of each theme. The world convocation will then be able to speak in the name of the churches and it can therefore be assumed that its decisions will be endorsed by the individual churches on the basis of their respective assumptions. The authority of the world convocation is, in a real sense, the sum total of the authority proper to the individual churches. This does not rule out the possibility that the world convocation may open up new dimensions. The very fact that the convictions of the individual churches are taken seriously at the preparatory stage makes it all the more likely that new and unexpected insights and perspectives will result from the actual confrontation. An area of freedom can emerge within which the Holy Spirit can achieve 'more than we can desire or comprehend'. Rather, the authority of the World Convocation will depend on how far the Holy Spirit takes hold of it and makes it the Spirit's instrument. No organization, however clever it may be, can make this happen. The World Convocation can speak a word which no one can ignore and for which many are longing. But, it can also be a worthless experience. For the World Convocation to be worthful, it must be a spiritual venture.

d) If the projected world convocation is to gain wide backing, it is important that the world confessional organizations (world communions) be explicitly involved in the project. Although the original initiative should come from the World Council of Churches (and from it alone), cooperation with the confessional families is indispensable for the success of the project. They

should be asked to form an ad hoc body under the aegis of the World Council of Churches to assume responsibility for the convocation. The Roman Catholic Church should also be invited to cooperate in this ad hoc body. In view of its size and importance, it would obviously have to be allocated a larger number of representatives. But no church should furnish more than a third of the members in this ad hoc body.

The active cooperation of the world confessional bodies (world communions) is important because they can contribute to the debate the views of their respective traditions and can support the findings of the world convocation in relation to their member churches. The World Council of Churches cannot speak to the individual churches in the same way. There is also the fact that some churches are members of a world communion while not being members of the World Council of Churches. The Roman Catholic Church remains quite outside the World Council of Churches, but is engaged in a complex of dialogues with other world confessional communions. A number of common perspectives have emerged in this exchange which could be used for the world convocation.

What is important, of course, is not only the confessional dimension but also and equally the regional contribution. The World Council of Churches has in this respect an indispensable role to fulfil. Because it is in direct contact with the churches in the different regions, it is in a position to ensure that the individual regions are adequately represented. A certain number of seats on the ad hoc body responsible for the world convocation should be reserved in principle for the regional ecumenical organizations.

e) All the considerations mentioned so far refer to the institutional supporters of the world convocation. These have to be established. The way to a comprehensive world convocation can only be opened up if the institutional problems and obstacles are clearly recognized and dealt with. At the same time, however, it must be recognized that the world convocation can only speak and act for the churches if it grows out of a movement within the churches. The themes of justice, peace and the integrity of creation must be taken up in the churches already before the convocation. Only then can the vital forces which are working in the churches in this direction make themselves heard and achieve united form in the World Convocation. Movements which are working for one specific goal can establish new connections and contacts beyond the national boundaries. The world convocation can thus have an enhanced effect for the struggle of the churches for justice, for the defence of human rights, for the condemnation of oppression and torture, for the reduction of armaments. It is particularly imperative that the commitment of the churches for the integrity of creation should also take concrete and tangible shape.

The contribution of the movements is indispensable. Certainly the world convocation will consist of representatives of the churches. Ortherwise it would hardly be recognized by the churches as representative. But it should under no circumstances be isolated from the churches. It cannot take place 'behind closed doors' but must be answerable to the whole constituency of the Church, especially, to those who are already committed to the struggle.

The 'council' of the apostles (Acts 15) may serve as an example in this respect. Paul and a few Pharisees who had become believers, first put forward

the conflicting positions. Whereupon the apostles and the elders meet together to consider the matter (v.6). Peter and James are the spokesmen. But the negotiations are clearly conducted in the presence of the community. Repeatedly we hear of 'all the multitude'. They listen attentively and in the end declare their approval. The communication between the responsible leaders and the community is maintained from start to finish. Does this model not also apply - mutatis mutandis - to the world convocation for justice, peace and the integrity of creation?

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JUSTICE, PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

Resource Materials 3.2

INTEGRITY OF CREATION
An Ecumenical Discussion

INTRODUCTION

The intention of this document is to engage churches, Christian groups and all people who are concerned about the integrity of creation in a process of study and action.

The study on the integrity of creation is part of a much larger process. The Vancouver Assembly of the World Council of Churches invited all churches "to engage in a conciliar process of mutual commitment (covenant) to justice, peace and the integrity of creation". While the terms justice and peace are familiar, "the integrity of creation" is new. To be sure, it includes ecological and environmental issues, but goes beyond them. Its central thrust aims at a caring attitude towards nature - an emphasis that is evident in the German "Bewahrung der Schöpfung" and in the French "sauvegarde de la création". The English "the integrity of creation" says more. It tries to bring together the issues of justice, peace and the environment by stressing the fact that there is an integrity or unity that is given in God's creation.

An ecumencial consultation was held from February 25 to March 3, 1988 in Granvollen, Norway, to explore the meaning of the term the integrity of creation. This document sets out the results of that consultation. There were about fifty participants at this meeting from the Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Protestant churches from all parts of the world. There were representatives from other faiths - Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh. There were also Christian Indigenous People. During the first three days there were presentations from various perspectives on the understanding of creation and the threats to creation. The Prime Minister of Norway, Gro Harlem Brundtland, who was the moderator of the World Commission on Environment and Development, gave the key-note address. During the next four days, the participants divided themselves into five small groups to probe the insights and issues that emerged.

There were many points of agreement. There were also many disagreements. Not least of these was the question of how one does theology. Some thought

that one should first examine biblical and Christian theological traditions on the doctrine of creation and then work out the implications for dealing with the critical issues of our time. Others argued that one should begin with the critical issues and then address them theologically. Given the plurality of faith traditions and theological viewpoints at the consultation, there were also sharp differences in the understanding of the "integrity of creation". The consultation was an exercise in conciliarity - to listen and to be heard so that positions and viewpoints may be in conversation with each other. In a significant way the consultation tried to be inclusive without lessening the particular emphasis of each entry into what is meant by the integrity of creation. To have strived for less would have been to betray the very concern of the integrity of creation.

Yet, the document is not exhaustive on all aspects of the Christian doctrine of creation. Neither does it cover all the aspects that could be included under the topic of the integrity of creation. It is tentative and exploratory. Its primary concern is to provide ways of entering into an ongoing discussion and to provide "windows" into what is meant by the integrity of creation. It is, therefore, a paper for discussion and not a position paper to be endorsed by the churches.

EXPERIENCES OF BROKENNESS
... YEARNINGS FOR WHOLENESS

> My name is Anna. I am from the Marshall Islands. My people have traditionally treasured our lands and lagoons - sources of our food. My people are a sharing people who live in close interdependence, not only with one another, but also with our atoll homes. Now, however, we are troubled. Many of our young people see no future in life. Our land no longer feeds us. The more we eat of its fruit and the fish in our lagoons the sicker we become. What has happened to my people? What has happened to our land?
>
> From 1946 to 1958 nuclear tests were held in our atolls. Some of these atolls have simply disappeared. Others are still slowly releasing radioactivity into our waters. While our older people are still suffering from radiation sickness, many of our children have genetic defects. We women feel this particularly; we think of our children.
>
> More recently, we have been moved from some of our atolls and crowded together on Ebeye Atoll in order that our atolls could be testing grounds for advanced weapon systems. We have no traditional link with this new land; part of our identity has been taken away. Our dwelling place is overcrowded. We are poor. Our lagoon is a

> source of disease, not life. Yes, much has happened to our people. Much has happened to our land.

This story gives dramatic witness to the consequences of humanity's attempt to "master" creation: destruction of fish, forests and atolls; pollution of land and waterways; displacement of people from their sacred lands; injury, disease, suffering and death to innocent people. It also draws our attention to the interconnectedness of the issues of justice, peace and the integrity of creation. The story also shows the "structures of sin" that have assumed power over people and the whole of creation.

Throughout its history, humankind has known the tension between living in relation with creation and seeking to master it. However, in the modern era in Western civilization, and especially through the scientific revolution, the relationship to creation has fundamentally changed. Since the marriage of science and technology in the Industrial Revolution, Western culture has presumed "mastery" over creation as its God-given right and duty. Nurtured by the Englightenment, this presumed prerogative has radically transformed human life and culture and affected the rest of creation. At the most visible level, this transformation is evident in developments in such areas as transportation, various forms of energy, architecture, health care, technology, communcation, fertilization, biochemistry, weaponry, the modern computer and much more. At more subtle, but no less important levels, the transformation is evident in ideas and ideologies that undergird political and economic systems, values and morality, relationships among and between cultures , relationships among and between nations, between people and the creation.

To be sure, science and technology have done much to enhance the quality of life. However, many of these achievements have also seriously affected the earth's ecosphere, threatening its capacity to support life and have put God's creation in great peril.

The drive to have "mastery" over creation has resulted in the senseless exploitation of natural resources, the alienation of the land from people and the destruction of indigenous cultures. It ignores the experiences of oppressed peoples like the Blacks and women who suffer under its weight. It also undermines other highly developed systems of scientific, religious and philosophical thought. For example, Western medicine as it developed and spread over the world began to supplant indigenous systems of medicine which have a more holistic approach to health care and healing.

With the industrial mode has come a world view that looks on creation as manageable and at the disposal of human beings. It is a world view that does not respect humanity's dependence on the earth as mother and as the source of life and nourishment. Instead, it views the earth as something to be used and owned by a few, and "mastered" so as to maximize profits for a few. It is the power of ownership, the power to manipulate and control that is the basis of the industrial profit-centered mode of development. Earlier, Western science and technology with an industrial mindset made colonization possible, both internally and in relation to nations in the South. Now the mind-set of science and technology has become a universal mode, and has led to a

militarization of the globe and a dangerous arms race that threatens many parts of the world.

Governments and ruling groups in the South have also adopted similiar views out of self-interest and to maximize their profits. Some of the consequences are the grabbing of land from and the denial of property rights to Indigenous Peoples; the control of educational and religious institutions to propagate an ideology of submission; and a relative disregard for human and all other created life.

The development of this universal industrial mindset must be seen in relation to the growth in Western culture of a philosophy of dualism, which affirms a radical divide between spirit and matter, soul and body, male and female.

Over the centuries, this dualistic philosophy has played a significant role in many Christian theologies, resulting in a belief in a hierarchy of values or in a theory of a chain-of-being that absolutizes human-centered and male-centered creation. The hierarchical view of creation puts women and the rest of creation in a position of powerlessness - to be owned, exploited and violated. Many churches and Christians also subscribe to this world view and uncritically support the economic and political forces which reinforce this world view.

Furthermore, the churches by their divisions reflect the brokenness of the creation. The churches have failed to uphold creation's integrity as a primary good and to reflect this unity within their own life. In our time, the church needs to discover its contemporary response as a co-creator with the transforming power of God in a covenant and commitment for justice, peace and the integrity of creation.

Therefore, we celebrate at this time the actions of those who embrace wholeness, and mention the following as representative of many others:

We celebrate the life affirming actions of Christians who participate in movements for justice, peace and the integrity of creation.

We celebrate the women and men who through symbolic actions, like the Day of the Tree celebrated in Benin, raise the awareness of their communities to the strength of united action.

We celebrate the Chipko and Apiko movements in India where women protect with their own bodies the trees that are to be cut down by logging companies.

We celebrate the actions of the Christians in the Philippines who hinder by protest actions the transportation of trees by logging companies exploiting the forest resources.

We celebrate the sharing and solidarity women experience in global ecumenical movements like the World Day of Prayer and the Fellowship of the Least Coin, in which they focus on issues of justice, peace and the integrity of creation, and make networks of commitment to work for the wholeness of creation.

We celebrate the actions of church groups and other movements particularly in Europe and North America who have taken up the concern to reduce pollution and to care for the earth. In particular, we commend the efforts of those who seek the reduction of the causes of acid rain, the prevention of the poisoning of ground waters through chemical fertilization of farmlands, and the elimination of nuclear and other hazardous wastes.

The experiences of brokenness and yearnings for wholeness are evident everywhere. Perspectives from the experiences of women, Indigenous Peoples, the ecological struggle, the "second world" and Peoples of other Faiths are given both to show the pervasiveness of the concern for the integrity of creation and to indicate the variety of ways in which this concern is expressed.

A Perspective from the Experiences of Women

> In December 1984, at Bhopal, India, 10,000 men, women and children (according to an unofficial UNICEF assessment) died when the highly toxic MIC (Methyl Isocyanate) gas escaped from the Union Carbide factory, converting the city into a gas chamber. It is estimated that another 40,000 people were seriously injured and a further 200,000 badly affected by partial or complete blindness, mental illness, pulmonary and gynaecological diseases with an increase in the number of abortions and stillbirths. Two years later, reports of the far reaching effects of this tragedy on the population of that city are still coming in. Other forms of life have also been affected. The report is: Creation was broken!

Voices of women speak of the impact the disintegration of creation has had particularly on their lives.

When land, air and water are polluted and poisoned, women and children, particularly unborn children, are usually the first to be affected. As the earth is hurt by radioactivity from Chernobyl and Three Mile Island; by acid rain in Europe and North America; by the use of fertilizers and pesticides; by industrial chemicals; or by drought, floods, desertification and deforestation, women also suffer as they try to provide healthy and sufficient food for themselves and their families.

There is a saying that "when sister earth suffers, women suffer too". Violence against nature is violence against women. The reverse is also true; violence against women is violence against nature. Women, like nature, are vulnerable to violation. They too can be treated as objects to be used, abused or manipulated. Their sexuality and labour can be exploited. When the earth, the sea, the air, the forests are violated, women also bear the brunt of it. Creation is broken!

Both women and creation can be owned by men, objectified and treated as "the other", subjugated and used for male dominated hierarchies. This has been

the prominent philosophy on which the industrial mindset has operated. It has affected the lives of women in all parts of the globe, be it in the North or the South, the East or the West, although there are differences in the levels of oppression women experience in different contexts. In those states which assure a system of social support for women, and especially for mothers of young children, some of the worst effects of industrialism upon women are being partially ameliorated. The oppression of the majority of women caused by the industrial mind-set is aggravated by various forms of religious and cultural oppression.

The increasing professionalism and industrialisation of health care provide a particularly horrendous example of the violence done to the women of the South. These are used as guinea-pigs for the testing of drugs of unproven safety such as "injectable contraceptives". Drugs banned in the countries of their origin are used on these unsuspecting women. They are considered as objects; and their bodies "used", as nature is "used".

Women, too, are not free from this industrial mind-set. They also participate in the exploitation and abuse of other human beings, of other forms of life, and the environment. In subsistance economies, where basic human survival is at stake, women unwittingly add to the brokeness of creation. When a poor woman's double day's work is further lengthened with the need to search for safe food and water, fuel and fodder, already scarce resources are further depleted without thought given to the protection of the environment.

Women and men are called to defend the creation and to heal its brokenness. This call is rooted in hope - a consciousness of the creative and continuous presence of God in the world. This hope is like that of the women who set out on a journey of faith to the grave of Jesus on Easter morning. They anticipated obstacles. "Who will roll away the stone?" Yet, they persisted on the journey, and met the risen Christ. The hope has as its basis faith in the risen Christ.

We are called to actualize this hope in concrete ways. Specifically, we are called to resist the threats to life and to continue to bear new life inspite of oppression and the apparent hopelessness of situations.

We are called to celebrate the mystery of creation. To recognize God's living presence in and around us made known in continuous acts of creation inspite of the threats to life. The mystery of creation must be expressed in language and metaphor that arises out of the experience of women and speaks to women in different cultural contexts. Our image of God is dynamic. It is the image of sharing love that finds expression in the redeeming and healing presence of Jesus Christ. On the cross, Jesus is seen as one who shares his life making whole what is broken. In his resurrection is our hope.

A Perspective from the Experiences of Indigenous Peoples

> My name is Mamani. I am an Aymara Indian from Bolivia. Seventy percent of the Bolivian population are Indians from the Aymara or Quechua tribes. Only 30 percent are Spanish or other

immigrants. Yet, since the invasion five centuries ago, ruling power has been held by this minority. We have been subjugated and oppressed.

For all of these five centuries we have been exploited by the colonial power as it extracted minerals from its new territories and made great profits. At first, we worked the mines as slaves; then as very cheap labour. Because of the working conditions, many millions of Indian workers have died in the mines. Recently this crisis has become even worse. In 1986 under Governmental Decree 21060, the National Mining Company was privatized, new technologies were imported, resulting in 200,000 Indians losing their jobs and further increasing the number of unemployed Indians. Bolivia's huge national debt also adds to the oppression of Native Peoples.

I see two contending nations in Bolivia. On the one hand, the immigrant minority, identifying itself as Christian, maintains an ideology of accumulation, domination and oppression. We Indians, on the other hand, believe that the gifts of creation should benefit all and that consumption should be limited to what is necessary.

In 1978 I became the first Indigenous bishop of the Methodist Church in Bolivia. Our church is struggling to understand itself as both Indian and Christian. For this reason you must understand our traditional view of creation in order to understand us. The whole of nature was created by Pacha Mama, the cosmic God, who guarantees the continuity and harmony of creation. The God of salvation revealed in an anthropomorphic manifestation is Wiracocha. The first time our ancestors saw the bearded Spanish, they called them Wiracochas. But Pacha Mama, the Eternal Mother, is a more maternal human expression. In recent discoveries of the huge construction of the Tiawanaco civilization, the sun and its warmth can be seen as the source of human life.

Our Aymara communities, and those of all Andean Native Peoples, are participatory. Our sense of community extends to the relationship between people and all of creation. It includes safeguarding the harmony of nature. If the churches are really concerned for the integrity of creation, then they will have to recover a gospel that is good news for all of creation.

Some estimate Indigenous Peoples to be roughly one quarter of the world's population. By Indigenous Peoples are meant tribal people who have traditional world-views which underscore attempts to live in harmonious and sane ways with the whole of creation. Some examples of Indigenous Peoples are the American Indians, the Dalits and tribals of India, Maoris and other Pacific Islanders, Aboriginal Australians, Africans and tribal Asians.

Inspite of their numbers, Indigenous Peoples are too easily overlooked. Even the international language categories of first, second and third worlds do not include Indigenous Peoples. They are imposed upon culturally; and they are systematically oppressed.

All over the world, Indigenous Peoples continue to suffer from persistent attempts by powerful governments and corporate interests to take their lands. Indigenous Peoples live in dynamic relationship with their lands. They conceive of the people belonging to the land and not the land belonging to the people. Such an attitude makes them easily vulnerable to interests that work with Western notions of the ownership of land. Furthermore, because of the close relationship between land and people, the expropriation of the lands of Indigenous Peoples is also an attack on their cultures, religions and systems of value.

Even the Indigenous Peoples who live on their own lands are not free. Unjust economic policies have been introduced to protect industries that continue to pollute the land, the water and the air of the Indigenous Peoples. Agrobusiness in the South has led to the destruction of entire forests. The Indigenous Peoples in Latin America are being forced by the rich to plant marijuana and coca which are then sold at high prices overseas. In some other places, Indigenous Peoples are forced to plant only cash crops which are sold to settle payments for external debts. Strip mining, hunting safaris and whaling are other examples of the ruthless intervention in the lives of Indigenous Peoples. Indigenous Peoples experience all these as the disintegration of creation.

Indigenous Peoples also experience the disintegration of creation in the alienation caused by systems of education and imposed foreign values which are often advocated by churches. The consequent disintegration is evident in high unemployment. For instance, up to 95% in some Nothern American Indian reservations are unemployed. Extended family structures also disintegrate and traditional family values are destroyed. While all Indigenous Peoples are affected, the forced separation of husbands and wives in the Southern Africa work situation is perhaps the most dramatic.

Like other Indigenous Peoples, African peoples also have a relationship of mutual obligation with creation. African peoples play a very active role in caring for the creation and in teaching the young to care for and respect creation and to maintain relations in community. In Africa, right relations means justice. Right relations promote mutuality and control over the misuse of power. Women and men in everyday life exercise these values, and failure to do so is deemed a disgrace to the whole community. The roots for exploitation and domination of nature and humanity in Africa are in Western cultural imperialism. The rupture and destruction of African cultures have robbed Africa of its identity.

At stake in the oppression of Indigenous Peoples is the balance and wholeness of all creation. The devastation of the earth is inextricably bound up with the devastation of peoples. The destruction of Indigenous Peoples destroys a fundamental base of spiritual strength and understanding of creation. It is an understanding which still knows the spiritual interrelatedness of all things visible and invisible. This rich spiritual understanding can become a source of renewed strength and rootedness for all people, especially for Christians in their understanding of the Gospel.

For the sake of all creation, theology must begin with creation. Just as concerned Christian people have begun to learn that true peace can only be realized through the establishment of justice and that peace flows naturally out of justice, so now we must begin to learn that justice and then peace flow naturally out of a deep respect for all of creation. Thus for Indigenous Peoples a much more theologically sound expression would be "CREATION, JUSTICE AND PEACE". Not only is this more satisfying to Indigenous theology, but such a title suddenly begins to reflect the theological content and sequence of the ancient ecumenical creeds of Christianity.

We must now clearly understand that justice is the maintenance of the wholeness of creation. Justice involves the righting of relationships not only between human beings, but between human beings and the earth and the things of the earth. Our concept of justice must shift away from being that which protects possessions towards that which provides healing of relationships between human beings, between cultures, and between human beings and all of creation. The Indigenous concept of justice is such a process of healing. If we begin with the perception of ourselves as a part of the wholeness of creation and if we understand justice as the practice of human beings in maintaining the interrelatedness of all creation, then peace will flow naturally.

The dilemna of Indigenous Peoples is that at times their only hope appears to be participation in the modern industrial world, which has also become the source of their destruction. There seems to be no way to exist apart from that system; yet that system is what kills them. They are oppressed by it; but even as they turn toward it as a source of salvation, they become their own oppressors. There is a yearning for the totality and wholeness of creation among Indigenous Peoples. Yet, they too become destroyers of that wholeness as they struggle to ensure their own survival, hemmed in by economic structures which only begin to reward them when they also participate in the devastation of their own relatedness to the earth.

In the Gospel of Mark Jesus proclaims: "The time is fulfilled. The Kingdom of God is near. Repent, and believe the Gospel" (Mk. 1:15). In this context it is more and more clear that the Kingdom of God is not merely a relationship between human beings and God that has happened or will happen at a particular time. Rather, the Kingdom of God is the space where God reigns. It must be understood as a metaphor for all of creation. In this context repentance (metanoia) must be informed by the Old Testament notion of repentance as a "return" (shub). It is a return to God and to the space where God reigns as Creator, that is, to a proper relationship of creatures to the Creator. It is a return that brings one back into harmony and balance with God and with the rest of creation. Thus repentance opens new possibilities for

understanding ourselves and our place in creation. For Indigenous Peoples repentance must involve a return to their spiritual source, that is to their land. To block this aspiration of Indigenous Peoples is to keep them in their sin.

An Ecological Perspective

My name is Junior and I am from St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Among many Christian people in several Caribbean islands, including my country, it is a tradition to eat crayfish as the main source of protein on Good Friday. This means large numbers of people converge on the rivers on Holy Thursday.

The rivers are open to the public. No government control exists on fresh water fishing. People catch more than they need and the species has been substantially depleted. Of late, the old method of fishing has given place to the technique of spreading tobacco and other poisonous substances in the river which drug the fish making it easier to catch them. What is not caught is left to die and pollute the water. The species is fast becoming extinct. Yet this religious custom prevails. Neither the churches nor the governments pay much attention to the problem.

My name is Gerhard. Towards the end of the revolutionary 1960s I became a member of a group of sensitive ecological people from the Evangelical Church of the FRG. As a concrete commitment to the ecological issue, we started using recycled paper. It saves wood, energy, and water; lessens pollution and the amount of waste by-products. First we began to use recycled paper for ourselves. Then we spread the message asking others also to use it. But we have faced big barriers. We were told that people like white paper. Copy machines start "coughing" with recycled paper. It is too expensive. We were told, "You use recycled paper, if you must, but leave us alone." However, we did not give in.

Neither were we discouraged. We continued the struggle. We felt that if there is a real demand in the market, then these problems will disappear. It was urgent that we create the need. We started with our immediate situation, namely,

> the church offices. Now we see the results of our persistence. For example, my church, the Church of Baden, uses recycled paper for 2/3 of its paper needs for copy paper, envelopes, computer paper, etc.

At the present time the land base of the earth is being threatened by deforestation and desertification, thus destroying the productive capacity and genetic resources of vast areas of the earth. In East Africa, for example, the search for firewood, the chief energy resource for millions of people, combined with the overgrazing of marginal lands is causing the desert to expand and the soil to deteriorate in ways that may be irreversible.

In addition, it is estimated that forests in less-developed countries will be depleted by 40 per cent by the year 2000. By 2020, less than two generations from now, nearly all accessible forests in the two-thirds world will have been cut. This situation is especially critical for the tropical rain forests in South America.

Equally important, deforestation is causing the dramatic extinction of plant and insect species. Some scientists estimate that one species of plant or animal life becomes extinct from the earth every hour. All of this depletes the genetic resources and biological diversity that are fundamental for nurturing the process of life.

The situation is equally precarious with the earth's water resources. In a number of countries, the availability of water per person for the year 2000 is projected to be "very low". Some of the countries identified as facing this crisis are South Korea, Syria, countries on the Arabian Peninsula, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco and Jamaica. Most worldwide use of water is for irrigation. But, while making land fertile to grow food, irrigation also causes negative side effects now being experienced globally. All water contains salt. As the irrigated water evaporates, the salt in the water either remains in the soil or works into the ground water. The increasing salinity of the water and the land is reducing crop yields in numerous Third World countries by 50 percent.

Water for drinking has also become a global problem. The World Health Organization recently reported that in 88 countries in the South 77 percent of the people are not being adequately served.

Air that is clean, breathable, and capable of regenerating the creation could also be in short supply in the years ahead. There are presently concerns over three threats to the earth's atmosphere: the rising level of carbon dioxide, the depletion of the ozone layer in the upper atmosphere, and the increase of acid rain throughout the globe.

In the light of these realities, the Church must engage technology at its source and not merely at its consequences. This is costly and difficult work. Technology is not neutral or value free; it is as much an ideology as it is a tool of science. It has in fact become an instrument of power and is itself trapped in vast networks of power which are complex, systemic, often multinational, and exists primarily to maximize profit. In New Testament terms "principalities and powers" have gripped our world, which means our struggle

with the misuse of science and technology is essentially a religious one. It also means that the churches' concern for the integrity of creation is more a matter of justice and peace than development aid or charity. From a biblical perspective, justice is the rendering of whatever is required for the fullest possible flourishing of creation. That which makes for wholeness in nature, in the human psyche and in human society is just. Biblically speaking peace is shalom. Shalom, in fact, is shorthand for all God's hopes and dreams for the creation. Peace is shared abundance and full health throughout the world. It is well-being extended to all creatures so that life is without debilitating fear. As the prophet Isaiah has taught us, the result of righteousness is peace. It is tranquility, serenity and the assurance that no people's security is purchased at the expense of any other people. And it is more. Peace means bread, rice and dance.

Empowered by this vision, the churches, in solidarity with all people of good will, are called to make manifest God's justice for humanity and creation, and to struggle for the transformation of the powers that hold both in bondage. We are painfully aware that we are party to these destructive powers. Yet, we are summoned to witness to the victory of Christ and the freedom from every form of death that he has won for us and the whole creation. That victory invites our active hope for a new day and a new order of things, when all creation is integrated, and every creature lives in joyful community with every other creature (Jer. 31:31-34; Col. 1:15-20).

Human action alone cannot bring this promised new day to fulfillment. It is essentially God's work to be accomplished in God's own time. But in the Spirit, God calls the churches to re-present Christ in the world as "the first fruits of the new creation" (James 1:18). Such witness must be in word and action and will necessarily move the churches to engage "the powers" of the world which remain unconverted (1 Cor. 2:6-8). This is costly, difficult and for the most part unfamiliar work. The churches have barely begun to understand the pervasiveness, the inner aspects and interdependence of the economic, political and technological structures (powers) that hold creation in bondage. What we do know, however, is that we have been given the task of incarnating the manifold wisdom of God to the powers for the world's transformation (Eph. 3:10).

A Comment from a "Second World" Perspective

While the societies in socialist countries ("second world") share many common ecological concerns and problems with societies in the industrially developed market economy societies, their situations have their own specificities. These need to be taken into account and given special attention within the framework of the JPIC process. The areas of difference are given below:

a) The ideological orientation and re-orientation now going on through the process of "New Thinking" and Perestroika seeks to renew the ideological roots of socialist societies in Marxist-Leninism. This process has its own special impact on people in socialist countries.

b) The political structures of planning and the centralized control of the production process and of technological development raise different kinds of questions in the socialist context.

c) The impact of market forces and of the world market on the industrial process in socialist countries raises different ecological issues.

d) In the usual classification of North and South countries, socialist countries are included in the category of the "North". However, there are significant differences in the way socialist countries relate to the "South".

e) The role and responsibility of Christian churches in these socialist countries are also understood differently; and they have their own specific problems.

Perspectives from People of Other Faiths

As Christians we share the earth with persons of many different faiths, ideologies and cultures. We are part of a common human family. We recognize that many of the issues that concern us as Christians and as churches can be resolved only in partnership with persons of other faiths and convictions. The encounter with people of other faiths sharpens our awareness to other ways of understanding the relationship between humanity, nature and God. These can enrich our understanding and, at times, help us to reformulate our views. It is with this concern in mind that we listen to the significance of the integrity of creation from other faith perspectives.

We recognize the common scriptural and spiritual heritage we have with Jews and Muslims. We share with them our biblical vision of creation as belonging to God, who created and ordered it. All these three traditions speak of the intrinsic value of creation, of the special relationship in which the whole created order stands before God, and of the special place of human beings as persons appointed by God to care for God's creation.

While recognizing a special place of human beings in creation, Judaism also emphasizes the fact that the special place accorded to human beings in the creation does not permit abuse or inappropriate "mastery" over the rest of creation. Jewish tradition has maintained time and again that Israel's vision of the non-human aspects of creation requires people to care for and serve other creatures (see, for example, Genesis 2:15). Care for the earth itself is reflected in the Sabbatical year and Jubilee laws. Scriptures even include laws for the protection of trees, preventing them from being cut when besieging enemy cities (Deuteronomy 20:19).

Jewish teaching firmly states that the whole of creation is God's. God is the primordial Creator, Sustainer, and is the One who renews creation. Indeed, certain texts from Jewish sacred writings (for example the creation Psalms) can help other peoples of faith to understand the Jewish teaching on the creation, and can serve as a basis for dialogue with the Jewish community about biblical visions of creation.

Islam also affirms that the whole creation is the working of God. The central concept of Islam is tawheed or the unity of God. Allah is unity; and

His unity is also reflected in the unity of humankind and the unity of humanity and nature. Humankind's role on earth is that of a khalifa, viceregent or trustee of God, who is accountable to God for the trusteeship granted by God. A wanton, careless and wasteful use of creation is sin against the Creator. An irreverent attitude to the creation, even in the slaying of an animal for food, is to militate against God's holy will.

Significantly Sikhism also emphasises the absolute dependence of creation on God. "For countless ages" says Guru Nanak, "there was utter misty darkness. There was neither day, nor night, no moon, no sun, but the Lord sat alone in a deep trance..."(AG. 1035). Then God created the universe of which humankind is a part. Human beings stand along with the rest of creation before God and depend on God for their being.

In the Buddha's teaching humanity functions in mutual interdependence with all creation. Human beings are intricately related to all sentient beings in a continuum of consciousness, but are special in that they are able to exercise will. Because of this, every human being, regardless of race, class, or sex has the potential for spiritual awakening and should be encouraged and supported towards that end. A skillful relation with creation is instrumental to spiritual awakening. Thus, human beings should respect all creation and respond to it with "humble harmlessness" (ahimsa) and compassion. There is no "just" violence in Buddhism.

In relating to the earth it is important to obtain a "right livelihood", a means of earning a living which is neither destructive nor causes suffering to self or others. Lawfully earned wealth should be used only as a means to provide supporting conditions for spiritual development for oneself and practising generosity to others, including animals.

Hinduism identifies God with the deepest level of existence in all things, the self or atman. Since God is one and invisible, he/she constitutes the fundamental principle of unity which runs through all creation. If we are united at the deepest levels of ourselves with God, we will have a profound and challenging justification for ahimsa or non-violence as a way of living. All beings should be treated as oneself because we do share a single self in God. We need to be reconciled with creation through a vision of the unity of all that exists in God. It involves in the words of the Bhagavadgita "the perception of God in all things and all things in God" (6:30). This outlook provides the basis for a celebrative love of creation, a reverence for life in all its forms and an unselfish way of sharing its blessings.

The Hindu affirmation of the fundamental unity of all existence has as its corollary the truth of life's interdependence. If a vision of life prompts a sense of compassion for all that exists, our appreciation of life's interdependence reminds us of our obligations to the rest of creation. We are indebted to non-human life forms and the inanimate world. These must also be the objects of our compassion, the recipients of our love and beneficiaries of our service. The Hindu principle of mutual obligation is based on individual life as an integral and interrelated part of all life. The uniqueness of the human being lies only in our ability to discover and celebrate life's unity in God through all that we do.

As Christians and churches we share a common concern for the creation with our neighbours of other faiths. To dialogue with them is to rediscover and lift up those traditions within each of our faith perspectives that affirm the intrinsic value of creation and the intimate interdependence of life. We then discover areas where there is much scope for mutual enrichment and correction, as well as areas for collaboration and cooperation on many contemporary issues related to creation. The 'Integrity of Creation' is a subject on which there is much scope for dialogue and mutual learning among the religious traditions of humankind.

BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL VISION
....THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

The experiences, struggles and theology expressed above make certain things clear.

First, these viewpoints are windows into understanding the integrity of creation. Certainly there are many more. Christians in different settings throughout the world will bring a variety of experiences and insights to deepen the understanding of this challenge.

Second, in each of these perspectives, the links of the integrity of creation with justice and peace are clearly evident. This underscores biblical and theological truth. Thus, we find an inter-section of two approaches to the churches' commitment to the integrity of creation. Theological affirmation, rooted in the credal understandings of the church through the ages and drawn from biblical resources, joins the theology of Christians who discover from their particular experiences that the integrity of creation, justice, and peace are three aspects of one reality - God's intention for the world.

Third, the perspectives of Christians engaged in the struggle for creation's integrity challenge the church to deepen its theological and biblical understanding at this point. Our task here is to engage our rich theological traditions with the contemporary and profound crisis threatening creations' integrity. A solid foundation in the biblical and theological understanding of the integrity of creation will help enable the churches to speak, act and respond with power.

Biblical Theological Perspectives on Creation

Our world is broken. The creation groans. We ourselves groan with it. We recognize the pervasive power of sin, both in us as persons, and in the structures which shape our existence. But the Risen Christ is victor over sin and death. And sin shall not triumph.

In our task ahead, we Christians need some clear biblical-theological perspectives for our orientation. We are not the first to embark on this theological task, and should be aware of possible mistakes in approach and attitude. We list some of these:

(a) Reductionism in theology - reducing the Gospel to a personal salvation, with emphasis on the eternal destiny of the human soul, ignoring God's work in the world; and sometimes suggesting that if persons are converted, all problems would resolve themselves;

(b) Scientific-technological hybris, persuading us that the ecological crisis is a technical problem to be solved purely by technical methods; ignoring its wider ramifications in justice and peace, in the sinful structures of human existence and in human greed and mindless industrial development;

(c) Romantic response reflected in the 'back to nature' approach, nostalgic for a return to a pre-technological way of life, ignoring the God-given dynamism of science/technology as a force to be brought under human control rather than to be escaped from,

(d) A neo-apocalyptic approach which sees the ecological crisis as harbinger of the end of the world, rather than as a judgment of God calling us to repentance and the mending of our ways;

(e) The utopian response which seeks unrealistic, naive and fanciful pictures of a perfect and problemless world in history; failing to recognize the structures of sin which will continue to menace us even without the ecological crisis;

(f) The fatalist response which is a combination of indifference and despair, and says: "After all, we can't do anything about it!"

(g) The "other people's problem" response which can be seen in parts of the world where people take the ecocrisis to be a problem of advanced industrial societies and see a false alternative or priority between the demands of justice and the need to sustain the biosphere.

Our Theological Heritage

Creation as God's Gift

Creation came into being by the will and love of the Triune God, and as such it possesses an inner cohesion and goodness. Though human eyes may not always discern it, every creature and the whole creation in chorus bear witness to the glorious unity and harmony with which the creation is endowed. And when our human eyes are opened and our tongues unloosed, we too learn how to praise and participate in the life, love, power and freedom that is God's continuing gift and grace.

God is the "Creator of all things" (I Cor. 8:6; Rom. 11:36). Christ is the one "through whom all things were made" (John 1:3), I Cor. 8:6; Heb. 1:2). The Holy Spirit is "the Lord, the Giver of Life" (The Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed). If we speak of creation's "integrity", this must be our point of departure. We ourselves are not the ones who 'integrate' creation; its integration is prior to our concern, prior to our participation. The integrity

of creation is the work of the One who creates, redeems and sanctifies it. It is precisely that work that we have in mind when we speak of 'the integrity of creation' and our role in it.

'Creation out of Nothing'

A long tradition of the faith affirms that the world was created 'out of nothing' (ex nihilo), and not out of pre-existent matter. This doctrine prevents us from confusing God with the created reality. It finds expression, for instance, in the Second Book of Maccabees, "Beholding the heavens and the earth, and seeing all that is there, you will understand that God has created it all from nothing," (7:28).

We find that this doctrine also contains for us today an important nuance of meaning. For it implies that creation is not to be taken for granted. It is always in danger of regressing into oblivion and chaos. Human greed, exploitation and gross irresponsibility have unleashed forces of disintegration which threaten the very life of the world. Today, evidence of these forces are plainly visible.

The Reintegration of Creation

In and through the incarnation of the divine word, humanity and the whole creation are enabled to taste 'new life'. The old realities are still with us, and our consciousness of their negating and alienating power keeps us from presumption and the loss of vigilance, but they do not cause us to despair. For, through the sacrificial death and liberating victory of Christ, God has inaugurated the reintegration of this broken world. In his own person, Jesus Christ examplifies the glorious destiny of a transfigured creation.

The Intrinsic Worth of all Living Beings

The creation is good intrinsically. It is not only our human valuation (which is all too tenuous) that renders creation "good". Creation is good in and of itself as God's own intention and work.

This applies to all the beings, animate and inanimate, made by God and not only (or even especially) to humanity. The world of sea and forest, desert and fertile field, with its myriad creatures became, after all, the very context of the incarnation of the word.

In the Reign that has been initiated by God's reintegrative work in Jesus Christ, and is continued through the sanctifying presence of the divine Spirit, all creatures have their rightful place. They may live in harmony one with another, a "peaceable Kingdom". This, we recognize, is a matter of "faith, not sight"; yet it is the eschatological reality to which our faith points us, as it is also the basis of our sacramental life and the substance of our hope for a transformed natural and social order.

The Biblical Vision

In the Bible, the whole of creation renders praise and gratitude to the Creator. Unlike anthropocentric views which ascribe value to the environment

only because of its satisfying of human need, biblical perspectives underscore creation's goodness because it is the work of God. For this reason, all parts of the creation are described as giving God praise and glory with joy.

In Psalm 148, for instance, the sun, moon and stars, fire and hail, snow and frost, mountains, fruit trees, cedars, beasts, and cattle, all of them are invited to praise God from the heavens and the earth. Many Psalms echo this truth. In Psalm 96:1, all the earth "sings to the Lord". And later we read, "Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it; let the field exult, and everything in it! Then shall the trees of the wood sing for joy before the Lord ..." (v. 11-12) (see also Psalm 97:1,6; Psalm 19:1; etc.)

The Book of Job contains one of the Bible's most powerful descriptions of God's intimate action in bringing forth and sustaining all the dimensions of creation's life. Found in chapters 38 through 42:6, God's answer to Job comes as a series of questions poetically stressing God's presence in all the creation. "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding ... Have you commanded the morning since your days began, and caused the dawn to know its place ... Have you comprehended the expanse of the earth? Declare, if you know all this ... From whose womb did the ice come forth, and who has given birth to the hoarfrost of heaven ..." (Job 38:4,12,18,29). Job responds "Behold, I am of small account; what shall I answer thee? I lay my hand on my mouth" (40:4). Contrary to some presumed attitudes of humanity's dominant role over the earth, this vision compels a stance of humble awe and wonder. In this picture, the majesty of the creation disarms human arrogance and self-sufficiency.

Continually, biblical passages point to the ongoing activity of God in sustaining and upholding each dimension of the creation. The rich descriptions in Psalm 104, for example, portray the interdependence of the created order, which lives by the breath or Spirit of God (v. 29ff). In this Psalm, the Spirit of God is the source of life of all creatures, and not only humans.

In the wisdom literature of the Bible, the Creation itself speaks as the Wisdom of God:

> "Listen. Wisdom is calling out. Reason is making
> herself heard...
>
> The Lord created me at the beginning of his work
> the first of his acts of old.
> Ages ago I was set up at the first, before the
> earth began,
> Before he made the earth with its fields
> or the first of the dust of the world,
> when he established the heavens,
> I was there ...
> I was beside him, like a master workman
> I was daily his delight
> rejoicing before him always
> rejoicing in his inhabited world
> and delighting in the children of humanity".
>
> Proverbs 8:1, 22-32 RSV
> (see also Prov. 3:19-20)

In the Bible, wisdom (hochmah in Hebrew, sophia in Greek) is female, representing reason and delight, a source of rejoicing to God and to all humanity. The Genesis passages on creation should be read in conjunction with these other passages, including the visions of Isaiah (ch 11; 45:18ff; 65:17ff).

The opening chapters of Genesis have served as primary resources for the reflection of the church regarding the role of humanity, creation and God. In particular, attention has focused on Genesis 1:26-28, and the second and third chapters of Genesis. This biblical focus often used exclusively by some church traditions, has prevented the church from discovering the full biblical vision regarding the integrity of creation.

In Genesis 1:26-28, we find a vision of humanity's role of "dominion" within the created order. Such dominion, however, refers specifically to the task of upholding God's purposes in the creation, rather than imposing humanity's self-serving ends. In Gen. 2:15 we also find the legitimate interpretation of "dominion": humanity is "to serve and keep the earth".

Further, creation of humanity "in the image of God" finds its expression in Christ, whose self-giving love reconciles all that exists.

Central to these biblical insights is the conviction that the world and all creation belong to God. Contrary to modern assumptions which vest ownership of the earth in human hands, the Bible declares that "Whatever is under the whole heaven is mine" (Job 41:11). (See also Psalm 24:1; 50:12; Exodus 19:5; Deuteronomy 10:14). These truths became the basis for such Old Testament traditions as the Sabbath and the laws for the Jubilee Year.

"The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine," reads Leviticus 25:23. The Jubilee passages, giving instructions for the redistribution of land and wealth, rest on the belief that creation is not a possession to be seized by humanity, but a gift belonging to God.

While setting forth these pictures of creation's integrity, the biblical vision also underscores the break in relationship within humanity and between humanity and the rest of creation resulting from sin.
The passages in the beginning of Genesis describing humanity's disobedience to God display the resulting alienation from the earth. Adam and Eve are expelled from the Garden which they were commanded to "serve and keep" (Genesis 2:15). Moreover, Cain's murder of Abel causes his "blood to cry out from the ground" (4:10). Cain becomes a fugitive severed from a fruitful relationship to the earth.

The obvious ecological consequences of sin are echoed throughout the Old Testament. "The earth lies polluted under its inhabitants for they have transgressed the laws, violated the statutes ..." (Isaiah 24:5). Hosea laments the mourning of the earth, and the languishing of the beasts, birds, and fish because of humanity's unfaithfulness and sin (Hosea 4:3; for similar examples see Isaiah 5:8-10; Jeremiah 12:4).

In the New Testament there is a vision of the Reign of God as the fulfilment of God's intention for the creation. Although at the present time

it is hidden in suffering, it is also manifest in the experiences of healing and wholeness in which both women and men participate. The healing stories in the Gospels are to be seen as the healing of creation marred by human sin. Eyes are opened; lepers are cleansed; paralysis is healed; out of the mud of the earth, new eyes are created (John 9:6) emphasizing the creative dependency between human beings and the earth (adam and adama) as in the old creation stories. Creation is healed and restored when marginalized women and men form the new community in Christ.

This salvation brought about by Jesus is thus manifest in the physical and spiritual experience of a renewed life. The women in the healing stories often suffer from physical afflictions, and are considered by the society of that time as impure. They also are marginalized and treated as outcasts (Mark 5:22-43; Luke 13:10-17). However, Jesus makes them full persons, who are healed and empowered to participate. In some of the stories, their wholeness is given in the promise of shalom: "go in peace". It is a transition from non-belonging to belonging, from alienating impurity to integration, from brokenness to wholeness, from oppression to freedom.

The Reign of God as the fulfillment of God's intention for the creation is made concrete in the healing actions of Jesus. Jesus commissions his disciples to proclaim the reality of God's reign and to be engaged in its healing and reconciling reality. In regard to the resurrection of Jesus and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the reality of the Kingdom is made known in the gathering together of the new community which is inclusive of all peoples. Thus the Reign of God gives birth to the "ekklesia".

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul reminds them of their baptismal experience and obligation. In baptism they are all renewed into oneness in Christ, into an alternative community, with the potential to overcome the divisions and discriminations, often leading to oppression, that are otherwise imposed on them. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female" (Gal. 3:26-28). Paul speaks of this reconciliation as a new creation: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation..." (2 Cor 5:16f).

In Romans 8:18-28, the setting free of the creation is linked with the resurrection of human bodies and the manifestation of the children of God. 1 Corinthians 15:20-25 and 51-57; Ephesians 1:9-10, 15-23; 2 Peter 3:5-13; and many other New Testament passages, show the intimate connection between the salvation of human beings and the renewal, reconstitution and reordering of the whole universe.

Of course, this does not mean that the human and the extra-human aspects of creation are of the same level of worth or value in the eyes of God. What matters is the continuity and integrity between the two, not their comparative worth. There are occasions when humanity has to choose between the conflicting interests of a human person and that of a tree or an animal. There is thus both continuity and tension; and there are no a priori categories which fit every occasion.

The tension of continuity and surprise is present in the stories where the risen Christ appears to his disciples. His "bodily" appearance is

emphasized, so that he can be recognized (Luke 24:36-43; John 20:19-29). The couple at Emmaus know him in the breaking of the bread. But the moment they recognize him, he vanishes; and they are left with the concrete element of the broken bread - probably an allusion to the eucharist (Luke 24:13-35; cf. John 21:9-14). In the eucharist by the Holy Spirit the material elements, bread and wine, reveal Jesus' continous presence among them.

Thus the separation of transcendence and immanence is a denial not only of the incarnation of Christ but also of the resurrection. The divine presence of the risen Christ is still to be received in material things - in "fruits of the earth and human labour".

As we elevate the bread and wine, we proclaim again the presence of Christ in and for the world. We reaffirm the divine presence with the material world of human existence. We are reminded of our utter dependence upon the just sharing of human labour, food, drink and the material substance of the world. We, therefore, proclaim our unity as human beings in our common need for each other and for the integration of creation. As we break the bread together, we celebrate the sanctification of the material world of which the bread and we ourselves are part; the world of soil, water and air, of forests, mountains and lakes; a world continually bearing new life, nourishing, nurturing, rejoicing, aging, suffering, grieving, dying and revealing God.

Although Jesus Christ constitutes the focal point of the Biblical doctrine of the creation, the Trinitarian context is fundamental. The creation in its original and continuous phases, including its restoration and renewal, is the result of the one act of the Holy Trinity which, as the Creed so eloquently summarizes, proceeds from the Father, is actualized through the Son and completed in the Holy Spirit. This Trinitarian perspective is often concealed in the Christological focus of the Bible, as, for instance, in such pivotal statements of the New Testament as the opening verses of John's Gospel or the Pauline affirmation that all things are through him and for him.

The Integrity of Creation

Background and Intensions

The term "integrity of creation" is new for the Christian churches. It emerged in the Vancouver Assembly deliberations of the World Council of Churches. Several meetings have begun to explore the meaning of the term. The present work is a continuation of this process. The term is not without its difficulties, particularly when it is translated into some other languages. Yet, it is evocative of many meanings and, potentially, an appropriate expression of the Gospel for our age.

This document does not aim to give final definitions. Rather, the term is viewed as one which encourages the churches to reflect imaginatively on the whole doctrine of creation and its meaning for our particular moment in history. With this in view, the document presents here several aspects of the term.

Dependence upon the Creator

First and foremost, the integrity of creation causes us to reaffirm the truth that all that exists, visible and invisible, has God for its author. This not only implies the entire dependence of the creation upon its Creator, but also connotes something about the worth and dignity of the creation itself, whose life is thus sustained and held dear.

The Interrelatedness of All that Is

The integrity of creation implies that every creature is bound to every other creature in a great community and communion of being. It is particularly important for human beings to learn this truth, for we have thought ourselves apart, above, separate. But we are part of the totality, sharing with all other living beings their creaturehood, with its limitations and its possibilities. Nor are we strangers to the material world; we too are "flesh" (Is.40:11), we too receive our life, daily, at the hands of our Maker (Ps. 104: 29-30).

Wholeness

The term integrity of creation suggests a perspective of wholeness. It militates against narrowness and parochialism. It impells us to search for meaning in our total environment, not only in our local communities, our nations, our regions and continents, but globally - indeed, universally. The term presses towards an inclusiveness that human beings have, perhaps, only just begun to explore.

The Stewardship of Creation

In this term, we hear that the human species is called to employ its wisdom and creative skills in all fields of endeavour - industry, economics, politics, science, art - under the impulse of a strong sense of stewardship. According to the Scriptures, stewardship, far from being a merely utilitarian and managerial metaphor, assumes as its basis a solidarity with all for which the steward is responsible and answerable, and it issues in a life of service and sacrifice. In all that we do and are, we are to offer ourselves sacramentally to God, to one another, and to the world God loves.

Commitment

While it has special application to the natural world, the term integrity of creation reminds us of human society as well, which is part of nature in the broadest sense. It reminds us, too, of social evils such as racism, sexism, unfair land distribution, political oppression by dominant groups, and other manifestations of the human sin of separation and pride. Militarism and the prospect of nuclear conflagration simply do not accord with a vision of an integrated creation. As we respond to the groans of creation, we shall find ourselves drawn into a struggle, together with that Spirit which wrestles with our human spirits, for the liberation and transfiguration of the creation in all of its parts. The voiceless, human and others, should find their voice and be heard, the marginalized a place, and endangered species a champion. Our commitment to 'the integrity of creation' is a commitment to life in the midst of this world's kingdoms of death.

Hope

The integrity of creation is also an expression of Christian hope. This hope is undertaken in the midst of a world that is fragmented, distorted and threatened daily by many foes of life, visible and invisible. The creation is still in the grasp of sin, still prone to "nothingness". In the pollution of the biosphere, rampant deforestation and desertification, the stockpiling of nuclear wastes, the erosion of arable lands and many other phenomena, we see more than enough evidence of the vulnerability of the world and of human civilization. But the Gospel enables us to hope. These tokens of disintegration are not inevitable. Change, while neither automatic nor assured, is possible. And changes are happening. There are so many movements, Christian and other, which bear witness to God's continuing activity and are real signs of hope.

Solidarity and Fulfilment

Finally, the integrity of creation speaks to us as members of 'the body of Christ.' Through the One who loved "the world" (John 3:16), we are enabled to love and to embrace with compassion the whole creation. We are beginning to know the meaning of this love. Like the love of God by which it is enabled, love also involves suffering for 'the other' - and 'the other' understood, now, as inclusive of other species, not only of our own kind. In this solidarity with the whole, in the love of Christ, we shall find our own human fulfilment as well.

The Role of the Churches

Repentance

The churches can fulfil their vocation to solidarity and compassion only when they begin with repentance. As Christians, we confess that we have failed to realize the breadth of our vocation and have yielded to restrictive visions of our calling. The egocentrism and ethnocentrism of our pursuits have been exposed in our time as, perhaps, never before. By our neglect, if not also in positive ways, we have contributed to the emergence of a consumerist and anthropomorphic world view which denigrates both matter and the extrahuman species. Without knowing it (yet never in total innocence) we have even employed the Bible and our various traditions of doctrine to support prevailing patterns within triumphalistic and imperialistic societies. If we are to fulfil our prophetic calling, we churches shall have to become more critical of our past than we have tended to be, and alter in sometimes drastic ways our present programs and lifestyles.

The Common Search

When we are faithful to our calling, the church's testimony to creation is one of gratitude for being, and for the promise of the fullness of being. We are enabled, through faith, to see creation moving towards transfiguration and fulfillment, reflecting the eternal mystery of the Triune God. This is not our own wisdom or insight, it too is a gift. The First article of the Creeds can only be confessed truly and proclaimed faithfully in the light of the Second and Third articles.

It is, however, essential for the churches today to realize, as they have not always done heretofore, the reality and significance of that preliminary but persistent groping after transcendence that is proper to humankind as such, and never absent from the human spirit (Acts 17). Being created in God's image and likeness, the human being, irrespective of credal commitments, carries within itself a sense of dependency, a quest for wholeness, and a feeling for the inviolable sacredness of life. Humanity can be addressed. It is never quite cut off from its Source and Ground. Thus, in order to achieve a truly integral vision of creation, it is vital that the churches involve themselves in a diaconic service, in whose performance they are prepared to work with all who are concerned for life, for its enhancement.

The Liturgy of Creation

The true vocation of the human person is to be the priest of creation - to stand before the Creator on behalf of all creation (intercession), and in turn to interpret the good intention of the Creator to and for all.

For the churches, it is important not only to promote this calling in a general way, but to give it specific form and visibility in worship and in worldly service. In doing this, the Church will realize its own vocation as a community of healing.

Authentic liturgy is doxological, recapitulating the destiny of all creation in the praise of the Creator. Likewise it is sacramental, lifting up the unity of creation, incarnation, sacrament and service. "The Word became flesh." The Vancouver Assembly of the World Council of Churches (1983) spoke of this as the "eucharistic vision." We are to remember, however, that such expressions ought not to be reduced to mere ecclesial institutions and their practices. The eucharistic vision can be enjoyed only by communities of faith which learn how to bear the cross, to suffer with a "groaning creation". It is the very life of the world, in all of its mystery and promise, that lies at the heart of our mission today.

CONCLUSION

The integrity of creation provides an effective way to open up new perspectives for seeing issues of justice and peace. This is not to say that the demand for justice and the need to save our world from a nuclear holocaust can wait till the ecological issues are resolved. An adequate understanding of the integrity of creation provides a more effective way of dealing with all the crises of humanity, all the global issues of injustice and war, waste and exploitation, nuclear testing and the oppression of women, and a host of other problems which confront humanity.

The JPIC process is meant to be one in which all the churches and Christians join hands with each other and with all people of goodwill on a resolute advance to work with God in order to make the Integrity of Creation, with Justice and Peace, more of a reality. God is at work. In God is our trust and hope.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Since the primary aim of the consultation was to explore the meaning of "the integrity of creation", there was no systematic attempt to work on a list of recommendations. However, from time to time there were suggestions for further study and action, and it was agreed that these should be included as a part of the report.

I. - We invite all Churches and Christians to reflect on the integrity of creation and to express their faith in concrete commitments to work for the integrity of creation. In so doing, we will discover ways of confessing our faith together that are both timely and faithful to our best traditions. At the same time, we also need to work with peoples of other faiths and ideologies so that we may strive together for a world where the integrity of creation, justice and peace will be visible.

For the churches, this would involve among others:

- an analysis of the structures of sin that are evident in their own society and in the world so that we concentrate on structural changes and influence decisions in the field of public policy making.

- an integration of environmental concerns into church educational programmes and curricula in the areas of formal and non-formal education.

- to establish commissions or committees in the churches and councils of churches to deal with the concern for the integrity of creation and pay special attention to the issues raised by science and technology.

In particular, we ask the women in each church to identify those structures of sin that exploit nature and oppress women and other marginalized groups in their societies and to work for justice and the liberation of creation.

We also request that women in the churches make these issues a priority during the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women and that they share information on actions taken with the JPIC process and the WCC office in Geneva.

We request the churches to inform themselves intentionally about the issues of Indigenous Peoples. This process must include extensive dialogue with the Indigenous Peoples themselves so that the churches participate fully in the struggles of Indigenous Peoples.

The efforts of the churches to be actively engaged in exposing the ideologies of profit and exploitation that undergird modern Western science and technology would be an important part of the churches' solidarity with Indigenous Peoples.

In identifying issues in each local context and cultural situation and in working out appropriate responses and forms of action to defend the integrity of creation, the churches must be ready to take risks.

II. - For Further Study and Action within the WCC

The following questions raised during the consultation call for further study within the JPIC process:

1. Energy: its just use and distribution;

2. The physical environment: an integrated approach to air, land and water issues that would focus on acid rain, the poisoning of ground waters and ways of recycling what it commonly considered as "waste" or garbage.

3. Our respect for God's creation implies that we should not abuse or cause the suffering of individual animals. Attention is drawn particularly to vivisection, and the non-necessary use of animals in scientific experimentation.

4. Life-related issues, and in particular:

   Genetic engineering: human, plant and animal engineering, as well as bacteriological (biological) modification for military purposes.

   Reproductive technology, including in-vitro fertilization and emphasis on technological approaches to the problem of infertility to the detriment of normal medical approaches to this problem.

   Ethical practices related to contraception with specific reference to the abuse of technology in meeting population targets, taking away the right to informed choices;

   The implications of high technological approaches to medicine and medical care that can lead not only to the consideration of the person as object, but also to excessively high costs for a few and lack of adequate health care for all.

5. Analysis of the economical aspect of the integrity of creation.

6. An international consultation of Indigenous Peoples that would have, among others, a focus on the understanding of creation from Indigenous perspectives.

8. A "second world" consultation on the integrity of creation highlighting the particular issues in this area in the socialist countries.

9. It is recommended that the offices and consultations of the WCC and of the churches - in as far as this is not being done already - use recycled paper. This would be a practical step to alleviate the consequences of our violence to nature (saving of energy and water, protection of water and forests) and to enhance the credibility of the churches' commitment to justice, peace and the integrity of creation.

10. Recognizing the considerate amount of work that the WCC has already done, or is planning to do with regard to the integrity of creation, we recommend that the relevant work of the sub-units of the WCC be channeled to the churches through the JPIC process and that the work initiated during this consultation be systematically pursued.

JUSTICE, PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

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World Council of Churches
150, route de Ferney
1211 GENEVA 2

Resource Materials 3.3

THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT AND THE CONCEPT OF JUSTICE

A discussion paper

I INTRODUCTION

Discussions about justice too often lapse into the formal and the abstract. Too often the language used is easily detached from the immediacy and the tensions of real life.

The ecumenical movement has not always been able to escape this danger. There are, however, also instances in which the debate about justice in the ecumenical movement is very existential indeed, especially when such a debate takes place with the participation of those on whom sharp injustice is inflicted.

A quick survey of the discussions shows that the ecumenical movement has not been able to work out a generally accepted overall concept of justice. One of the reasons for this might be that, to a certain extent, the concept of justice needs to be linked to specific situations; so it has to be treated contextually to discover its meaning in real life. But even in situations in which contextual analysis is most advanced, and shared with the worldwide ecumenical family, for instance, in relation to apartheid in South Africa, different understandings of justice have emerged, especially when efforts are made to move beyond general observations and analyses to policy recommendations and implementation. The ecumenical movement is concerned about both the unity of the Church and the unity of humankind. Different understandings of justice, however, have themselves been the cause of disunity within the churches and among humankind.

In general, there is a greater consensus on what constitutes injustice than on what justice would require and on the practical steps that need to be taken toward a situation of less injustice. This might be the result of different understandings of the role of the Church in society. Some would argue that the Church, in its pronouncements and actions, should not go beyond a more general level (viz. the debate about "middle axioms"). Others are of the opinion that the credibility of the Church requires that it takes the heat of those struggling for less injustice, takes side, and becomes involved in specific struggles for justice.

This paper tries to trace pronouncements of the ecumenical movement which indicate that the struggle for justice is a central element in Christian faith and that it affects the very being of the Church. An effort is made to indentify some of the historical developments in the debate about justice and at the end some theological reflections are presented which could be of help to further the debate.

II DESCRIPTIONS OF JUSTICE

The World Conference on Church and Society, Geneva, 1966, indicated the difficulty to arrive at a satisfactory "definition" of justice:

> ... Christians agree that they themselves do not know the context of real divine justice and that, therefore, they may not absolutize any of their insights.
>
> ... The Christian knows by faith that no structure of society, no system of human power and security is perfectly just, and that every system falls under the judgement of God in so far as it is unable to reform itself in response to the call for justice of those who are under its power.

Despite this warning, several efforts were made to come to a greater precision of the concept of justice. Some key words which emerged are participation, life in community, equality, love and solidarity.

The Consultation on Christian Concern for Peace, Baden, Austria, 1970, sponsored by SODEPAX, decribed Christian witness to achieving an order of greater

> ... justice in which - as an essential condition for peace - each individual can enjoy the respect due to his person as a human being and every man, without any discrimination, and in full equality with other men, might have access to all civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

A conference in Bucharest, 1974, stated:

> Justice means awareness of the authentic interdependance of people and of people with their natural environment. Independance, in the sense of liberation from oppression by others, is a requirement of justice. But independence, in the sense of isolation from the human community, is neither possible nor just.

The WCC Conference on Faith, Science and the Future, Cambridge, USA, 1979, stated:

> Whatever label one may give to the political frame for a just society, it must be seen as the institutionalization of solidarity among human beings and as the recognition that the community is responsible for the welfare of its members. It is the opposite of individualism ...

The emphasis on solidarity and human community is also to be found in the report of the WCC Conference on The Community of Women and Men in the Church, Sheffield, 1981:

> ... While we believe that the call for justice is crucial, as Christians we affirm that justice is only the beginning point toward life in community ... Only as we live in a community of love will we move beyond relationships that are oppressive.

Earlier, the Consultation on Racism, Notting Hill, 1969, tried to clarify the relationship between justice and love:

> ... the Church must be willing to be not only an institution of love but also an institution of action, making inputs into societies to help effect a new balance of power that renders racism impotent. The Church must come to realize that in our institutionalized world the closest approximation to love possible, is justice.

The emphasis on human community was repeated at the Nairobi Assembly, 1975:

> ... The third reason is God's permanent demand for justice to restore all broken relations. Human relations are disturbed by sin and guilt not only at the individual level but also in specific economic an political developments. Justice is a way of relating both to God and to other people. Its consequences are seen first in the poor, the humiliated, the exploited and the oppressed. The search for a more just world and more just relationships between nations, peoples and generations brings us together as a uniting force.

The last sentence of this statement might be too optimistic and naive as it presupposes that everyone would agree on the specific content of justice. It is, however, not realistic to expect that this would happen before the Second Coming. The dynamic relation between the ideal and the partial was addressed at a consultation in Cyprus, 1981, which described justice as a messianic category:

> Justice ... is a messianic category. It embraces both God's righteousness and fidelity and his will for a right ordering of human community. Jesus proclaims justification of the repentant sinner before God and justice in society. Justice takes the form of punishment and prophetic judgement as well as compassion for the guilty and release of the prisoner, liberation of the oppressed. Justice is the historical, penultimate embodiment of love. We cannot put one against the other. It is mockery of the biblical witness to appeal to love and at the same time to deny justice. The eschatological reality of the kingdom of God is the coming of love in the form of justice and righteousness and of justice with love. The inseparable relations of justice and love finds its dramatic expression in the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Cyprus identified a key issue for churches ad Christians today:

> Justice is today at the centre of the aspirations of people in their struggles all over the world. How does justice as a messianic category actually relate to the historical struggles of our time? Christians are far away from being clear and united in their response ...

III JUSTICE AS A BASIC CATEGORY

Several ecumenical documents emphasize the centrality of justice. In the document on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, justice is linked to the eucharist:

> All kinds of injustice, racism, separation and lack of freedom are radically challenged when we share in the body and blood of Christ. Through the eucharist the all-renewing grace of God penetrates and restores human personality and dignity.

The above-mentioned Cyprus consultation speaks about the "inseparable relation of justice and love" which finds its dramatic expression in the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Because justice is related to the central elements of Christian faith - eucharist and the cross - it is not surprising that the concept of justice is given primacy in ecumenical discussions. The report of the first meeting of the Advisory Committee on the Just, Parcipatory and Sustainable Society, 1977, said: "Justice has become the acid test of all engagement in society and the criterion of all possible programmes and strategy for society."

The other elements of participation and sustainability relate to justice but are both included in justice. Justice demands participation as a constitutive element. Participation is not a strategic consideration but a desideratum of justice. By the same token, justice demands sustainability because it requires that legitimate and often unprotected claims of future generations upon the resources of the earth are met. Moreover, sustainability refers not only to physical sustainability, but also to social sustainability: a society characterized by injustice is socially unsustainable in the long run.

The 1979 Conference in Cambridge, USA, formulated these relationships as follows:

> Our central concern is with justice ... In clarifying the meaning of a just society we have found that, if justice is the goal, then sustainability should best be seen as a necessary, though not sufficient condition for the existence of justice, while we found participation to be a necessary condition without which neither sustainability nor justice will be achieved ...
>
> Participation is, however, not possible without power. Thus, a necessary condition for ensuring participation is the dispersal of power, both political and economic, and avoiding its concentration in the hands of a few who are not fully accountable to those affected by its exercise ...The roots of injustice lie embedded in the inequalities of wealth and incomes. They are nourished by the non-participatory nature of social organizations ... Sustainability is a condition of social justice ...We note that unsustainability arises not just from increasing consumerism and the rate of economic growth, but especially from competitive commercialism over which a non-participatory community has little control ... If this point is accepted, the link between sustainability and participation is easily seen ...

In conclusion, we would strongly argue the need to see the struggle for a just, participatory and sustainable society in coherent terms which will not allow us to dismember the concept and the goal into, for example, justice for the Third World, participation for the Second World and sustainability for the First World.

IV JUSTICE AS RELATED TO SPECIFIC ISSUES

The centrality of justice in Christian faith comes out very clearly in ecumenical reflection and action regarding specific issues at stake. In many instances ecumenical statements emphasize that situations of serious injustice require a faith response. Some key words in describing such situations are: evil, idolatry, anti-Christian, tyranny, heresy and sin. Below somes examples are given, mainly in the field of racial justice and socio-economic justice (passages indicating the need for a faith response are underlined). We will, however, start with the more general category of human rights.

1. Human rights

The issue of human rights could serve as an overarching theme for treating specific issues of justice and could provide the political framework for social justice.

In 1948, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and by 1976 two international covenants had come into force, one on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the other on Civil and Political Rights.

The former one affirms that "the ideal of free human beings enjoying freedom from fear and want can only be achieved if conditions are created whereby everyone may enjoy his economic, social and cultural rights, as well as his civil and political rights."

The Consultation on Human Rights and Christian Responsibility, organized by the WCC/CCIA in St. Pölten, Austria, 1974, took this UN covenant as a point of departure and stated that:

> ... all human rights, be they social, economic, religious or political are intertwined and interrelated. Therefore, they must be taken as a whole and the churches should give each one of these rights the same importance and seek the application of all of them.

Regarding economic rights it was assumed that:

> ... these rights can only be made a reality if a new international economic order is created which is based on equity, sovereign equality, interdependence, common interest and cooperation among nations which shall correct the inequalities and redress existing injustices; eliminate the widening gap between the rich and the poor; and make it possible for the economic and social development to take place in peace and justice.

Basic economic rights are the right to life and the right to work.

Cultural, religious, ideological and ethnic pluralities must not only be recognized but also be respected. I this request, it is important to recognize the desire and necessity of cultural autonomy, especially of ethnic, religious and social minorities.

It was felt in St. Pölten that:

> The full enjoyment of social and cultural rights is only possible under conditions of just peace. Peace sought for its own sake sometimes provided a pretext for the suppression of the rights of others. But peace in the context of justice provides opportunities and possibilities for full human and cultural development.

The fifth Assembly of the WCC, Nairobi, 1975, built on the results of the St. Pölten Consultation and affirmed the basic right for life:

> No rights are possible without the basic guarantees for life, including the right to work, to adequate food, to guaranteed health care, to decent housing, and to education for the full development of the human potential. Because women have the lowest status in most world communities their special needs should be recognized.

According to the Nairobi Assembly, the struggle for human rights is a central element of Christian faith:

> Our concerns for human rights are based on our conviction that God wills a society in which all can exercise full humanm rights ... Thus, God's will and his love are intended for all and the struggle of Christians for human rights is a fundamental response to Jesus Christ ... Because of discrepancies between what we profess and what we practise it is crucial for the churches to move from making declarations about human rights, to working for the full implementation of those rights.

In its statement about Human Rights in Latin America, the Nairobi Assembly was again very clear:

> ... the right to be human comes from God, and in defending human rights we are defending the will of God.

Thus, the concept of human rights provides us with an overall criteria to judge the quality of a society in term of the existence or absence of justice.

We will now turn to more specific issues as they relate to the right for life.

2. Racial justice

Long before the WCC was established, numerous strong ecumenical statements against racial discrimination had been issued. This line was continued at the Amsterdam Assembly and afterwards.

The Amsterdam Assembly, 1948, stated that churches should eliminate practices of racial discrimination from the Christian community: "... because they contradict all that it believes about God's love for all His children."

The Assembly strongly affirmed its conviction: "... that the Body of Christ cannot be divided by racial class and other discriminations, and that any church or Christian group which upholds them in the name of Christ, is denying the very meaning of the Christian faith."

The Second Assembly, Evanston, 1954, said that racial and ethnic fears, hates, and prejudices are more than social problems with whose existence we must reckon: "... they are sins against God and His commandments ..."

The Assembly declared as its conviction that: "... any form of segregation based on race, colour, or ethnic origin is contrary to the Gospel, and is incompatible with the Christian doctrine of man and with the nature of the Church of Christ."

The World Conference on Church and Society, Geneva 1966, observed that the domination of the white race in world economy and politics prevents the development of authentic human community:

> Christian theology has the responsibility to see this situation in historical perspective and to discern the need to destroy this idolatrous structure in order that God's purposes in history may be advanced ... It is enough for churches and groups to condemn the sin of racial arrogance and oppression. The struggle for radical change in structures will inevitably bring suffering and will demand costly and bitter engagement. For Christians to stand aloof from this struggle is to be disobedient to the call of God in history. The meaning of the Cross for our time can be nothing less than this.

The issue of racial justice permeated the Uppsala Assembly, 1968, which stated:

> Racism is a blatant denial of the Christian faith. (1) It denies the effectiveness of the reconciling work of Jesus Christ, through whose love all human diversities lose their divisive significance; (2) it denies our common humanity in creation and our belief that all men are made in God's image; (3) it falsely asserts that we find our significance in terms of racial identity rather than in Jesus Christ.

The WCC Central Committee, 1969, said that the struggle against racism is not against flesh and blood: "It is against the principalities, against the powers of evil, against the deeply entrenched demonic forces of racial prejudice and hatred that we must battle. Ours is a task of exorcism."

One of the fundamental convictions, reiterated by the Nairobi Assembly, 1975, was:

> Racism is a sin against God and against fellow human beings. It is contrary to the justice and the love of God revealed in Jesus Chirst ... When practised by Christians it denies the very faith we profess and undoes the credibility of the Church and its witness to Jesus Christ.

The next Assembly in Vancouver, 1983, recalled this statement and denounced: "... any theological justification of apartheid as a heretical perversion of the gospel."

3. Socio-economic justice

The basic conviction of the ecumenical movement regarding socio-economic issues was already given by the World Conference on Church, Community and State, Oxford, 1937, when it stated: "In the economic sphere the first duty of the Church is to insist that economic activities, like every other department of human life, stand under the judgement of Christ." It also said that when the acquisition of wealth is made the chief criterion for success, it is: ... as fatal in its moral consequences as any other form of idolatry ..."

In addressing the increasing international inequalities, the Geneva Conference on Church and Society, 1966, said that:

> Nations and governments are true to God's calling only if they cooperate in the search for this more equitable allocation. In so far as they hinder or are indifferent to it, they risk not only social and political disruption but also the judgement of God.

The Uppsala Assembly, 1968, went a step further and said: "To be complacent in the face of the world's needs is to be guilty of practical heresy."

The divisive character of economic structures was addressed by the Nairobi Assembly, 1975: "Economic structures may also obscure the confession of Christ ... Thus while we confess a Christ who frees and unites, the economic structure in which we live tend to enslave to wealth and divide."

Strong self-criticism was heard during the meeting of the WCC Central Committee, 1980:

> Too often the churches' voice only echoes the self-interest of the controlling class. They fail to see Lazarus at their own doorstep. To their own condemnation, a great gulf exists between themselves and the poor. While claiming to share, they hold back the best for themselves; by attempting to deceive God, they but bring a curse upon themselves.

Socio economic justice requires drastic changes of the prevaling economic structures and systems.

The Zürich Consultation, 1978, on Political Economy, Ethics and Theology: Some Contemporary Challenges, said:

> Justice demands an equitable system of production and distribution among all in the present generation, as well as between generations ... It would call for national and international structures.

Referring to the growing gap between rich and poor, the 1979 Conference on Faith, Science and the Future stated that:

> The situation obliges us all to state that the community of nations will continue to stand under judgement until the blasphemy of world hunger is removed ... Nothing must detract from the scandal of massive poverty and growing inequality in the world and from the necessity for change that this demands, both of ourselves and of the structures under which we live.

The strongest statements made by WCC bodies so far, came from the Vancouver Asembly, 1983, which said about the prevailing international economic order that:

> It has institutionalzed domination by Northern economies of trade, manufacturing, food processing and knowledge ... The machine of the prevailing economic order starves millions of people, and increases the number of unemployed every year ... We interpret this development as idolatry, stemming from human sin, a product of satanic forces. We are in a situation where we must go beyond the normal prophetic and intercessory action of the churches .. The Church is thus challenged not only in what it does, but in its very faith and being.

A meeting on Confessing Movements and Economic Justice, held in Sao Paolo, Brazil, 1987, and jointly sponsored by WCC/CCPD and the LWF, continued along these lines and issued a Call to Obedient Discipleship stating:

> 1. We confirm the statement of the Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Nairobi, Kenya, 1975, saying that "... while we confess a Christ who frees and unites the economic structures in which we live, tend to enslave to wealth and divide".
>
> 2. We recognize that the effect of this systemic economic oppression not only destroys the life and the unity of humankind, but also prevents and destroys the unity of the Church.
>
> 3. We recognize that attempts to defend these economic systems by the Christian faith is contrary to the Gospel and should be opposed by the churches in the strongest terms available to them (i.e. declaration of heresy, status confessionis, etc.).
>
> 4. We recognize that Christians must, therefore, reject and resist oppressive economic systems.
>
> 5. We recognize that churches and individual Christians, in order to be true to Christ's calling, must initiate, encourage and support efforts to create just, fully participatory economic systems that guarantee the right to life for all people as expressed in the right to food, shelter, work, health, dignity and self-determination.

The Sao Paolo meeting invited churches, congregations, groups and movements for justice and base communities to co-sign this call declaring that rejecting unjust and evil economic systems is a fundamental requirement of our Christian faith.

4. Justice between Women and Men

The Berlin Conference 1974 on "Sexism in the 1970s" was a land-mark in ecumenical discussions on the relationship between women and men. It labelled sexism as sin, to be combatted in all areas of life "in the context of worldwide efforts to attack the web of oppressions by which both men and women are dehumanized".

The Accra Faith and Order Consultation some months later (1974) stated:

"Our Christian faith leads us to hope for a renewed and transformed man-woman relationship. In the creation, God made us male and female persons, called to discover who we are and to find fullness of life through the community of men and women. Through the covenant with his people and the appeals of prophets, God has sought to bring justice, love and peace to that community. But we recognize that sin has distorted and thwarted the full development of our man-woman relationship.

The incarnate Christ entered our world as a human being, 'consubstantial' with us all (Council of Chalcedon). He took on the basic human reality which both men and women share in finding their identity. In his particularity as a Jewish man, He called men and women to relate in ways that did not depend upon roles dictated by their culture. He transformed those roles.

Baptized into his death and resurrection, we Christians die to our sinful selves and receive power to live in loving community through the newness of his life. We are to discern and foster the gifts of the Spirit in one another. Yet the severed and distorted relationship between men and women continues to reveal both the presence of the suffering Christ in the world and our need of reconciliation. Injustice appears in different forms. Whether one considers the professions, churches, government, remuneration, possibilities of advancement or decision-making power, women receive the lesser share. Called as men and women together to become signs of the promised kingdom, we hope for a true and complete community of Christ" (The Ecumenical Review, Vol. XXVII, No 4, pp 386-387).

The Study on the Community of Women and Men in the Church (1978-1981) highlighted the issue of sexism calling it a "false ideology".

The Sheffield Conference (1981) on the Community Study stressed the interlinkages between different forms of oppression in the "web of oppression": "The struggle for change is one struggle. Racism, sexism, and classism and all other forms of domination, rejection, and marginalization are linked together in a demonic symphony of oppression".

The Vancouver Assembly (1983) described sexism: "Just as any attitude, action or structure that threats people as inferior because of race is racism, so any domination or exclusion based on sex is sexism". The Assembly in addressing injustices against women stressed the concept of power, closely linked to the concept of justice. Power was described as empowerment, basic to the struggle for justice: "It is not conceived as power over someone, or against another. It allows those who are oppressed to stand up for themselves and to be full partners in the struggle for justice and dignity, towards the creation of a true community" (Gathered for Life, p. 88).

5. Relationships between Churches and People's Mouvements for Justice

Justice is also a key word in the work of Urban Rural Mission which considers it an integral part of the mission of the Church to participate in the struggles of the exploited, marginalized and oppressed for justice and liberation. Such participations have certain clear implications for the churches.

First, people's movements which embody the struggles of the oppressed, marginalized and victimized, are the response of the people to their dehumanizing situation and are movements for survival and liberation.

Second, people's movements and struggles for justice have their historic and particular contexts. The root causes of injustice are understood in their particular manifestations.

Third, in some cases, the churches, their leadership and constituencies, are in alignment with those powers and structures that bring about these situations of injustice and violation of people's rights. The churches should be willing to acknowledge, confess and repent.

Fourth, as the churches attempt to participate in the historic and contextual struggles and movements for justice, freedom and peace, in humility they have to acknowledge that:

a) These are not the exclusive domain and concerns of the churches. People and communities are already engaged in the struggles for justice, freedom and peace.

b) The churches should see their role as participants in rather than as initiators of the struggles for justice. To participate is to be in solidarity with the oppressed in their struggles for justice.

c) The churches should be willing to learn from the experiences and struggles of the people, rather than profess and claim that they have all the answers and solutions to the ongoing struggles for justice and peace and integrity of creation.

Fifth, the churches should recognize and acknowledge the sufferings and the sacrifices of the people and realize that the people are willing to pay heavy prices in the hope for a society in which there will be justice and freedom. It is not just self-interest that motivates people's movements and struggles for justice. Hence, the churches too must manifest the same spirit and participate in these sufferings and sacrifices rather than be mere spectators or worse be mediators and proponents of the interests of those who dominate, exploit and oppress.

6. Justice in the Ecumenical Youth Movement

The ecumenical youth movement perceives justice as the fundamental characteristic of the social and political order which Christians are to pursue. It precedes other values, such as peace or freedom: justice is understood as the foundation upon which they are to be based. There is a powerful desire and quest among young people to see their struggles for justice as expressions of their Christian identity and spirituality, and to find inspiration and direction for their struggles in spiritual life. This spirituality has been described as "a Christ-centered spirituality rooted in the life, history and struggle of the people." Christ reveals himself anew in the victims of injustice, and he renews the call to follow him in the struggle for justice.

It has been pointed out that the concept of justice needs to be elaborated more by the ecumenical youth movement. Further clarity is also needed regardingthe question to what extent churches and young Christians should identify with certain specific people's movements and struggles for justice. It is, however, clear that justice cannot be defined on an abstract level but that involvement in local contexts should be sought.

V SOME HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENTS

In the ecumenical debate on Christian social thought and action, the concept of justice has played a central role. Therefore, it is useful to recall some of the major developments in this debate. In trying to trace the highlights in these developments, it is good to realize that the ecumenical debate did not take place in a vacuum and that it was profoundly influenced by world historic events.

Many overviews of the ecumenical debate on Christian thought and action take the Universal Christian Conference on Life and Work, Stockholm, 1925, as a point of departure. Called by contemporaries the "Nicea of Ethics", this Conference became the starting point for the development of a new tradition of ecumenical social thought in the course of the following decades. It was strongly affirmed that the Gospel is for all realms of life and individualism in economic life was rejected. The Stockholm Conference awakened the conscience of the churches to challenges arising from the modern industrial society and it stirred Christian concern for new world order.

Even more important was the World Conference on Church, Community, and State, Oxford, 1937. This Conference took a more structural approach and stated, for instance, that sin cannot only be found in the hearts of individuals but that it had also entered into, and infected the structures of society. Capitalism and communism were critized but it was also recognized that the rise of communism was partly due to the fact that the churches had largely disregarded the great social problems of that time.

This debate was continued at the first Assembly of the WCC in Amsterdam, 1948. Seen against the background of the traumatic experiences with totalitarian systems like facism and stalinism, it is not surprising that immediately after the Second World War much emphasis was put on the defence of human freedom. Freedom, therefore, together with justice and control over the powers of the state, became central categories in the concept of the "responsible society" which was put forward by the Amsterdam Assembly.

Whereas the concept of the responsible society was born of the struggle against totalitarism, the experiences and aspirations of people in the dependent countries in the Southern hemisphere were quite different. As more and more churches from the South joined the WCC, the concept of the responsible society was challenged. This marked a second major phase in the development of ecumenical social thought. More emphasis was put on human dignity and social justice and the concept of human freedom shifted into the background. Radical change was, at least in the South, no longer perceived as a threat but interpreted as a manifestation of God's action in history aiming at the realization of social justice for all people.

The World Conference on Church and Society, Geneva, 1966, illustrated this breakthrough. The methodological orientation towards study and analysis was replaced by the urgent call for action. The ethical debate was no longer primarily concerned with the question of how the churches could understand and respond to the changes taking place in society, but rather with how the churches could become active factors and even initiators of radical transformation required. Methods of "action-reflection" gradually shifted the earlier emphases on studies into the background. The voice of "experts" was replaced by the voice of the people, the victims of power and injustice. More and more the issues concerning the social responsibility of the churches were posed in terms of confessing or denying the Christian faith. The struggles against injustice and oppression were understood not only as social and political struggles but as a spiritual struggle for the integrity of the witness and obedient discipleship of the Church.

Summarizing, the following shifts in emphases can be indicated in the development of ecumenical social thought:

- a move in emphasis from freedom to human dignity and social justice;

- a shift in methodology from studies to action-reflection models;

- a move from global analyses to more contextual approaches;

- a move from reacting to social injustice to initiating programmes of action;

- a move away from help for, to involvement and participation in struggles for justice;

- a move from putting the churches' role in the centre of struggles for justice to more modesty and realism by acknowledging the primary role of people's movements in these struggles;

- a stronger awareness of the interlinkages between the struggles for justice, peace, freedom, human dignity, human rights and integrity of creation;

- a stronger awareness that, in the struggles for justice, the credibility of the Church is at stake; the Church is challenged in its "very faith and being".

These shifts did not take place abruptly but were part of a historic process. Neither can it be said that the shifts were complete; elements and emphases of earlier stages in the ecumenical debate have not disappeared completely. It is, for example, still agreed that studies and careful analyses are needed. They are, however, complemented by other methods.

VI CHALLENGES

The East Asia Christian Conference, Kuala Lumpur, 1959, stated:

> The Church must endeavour to discern how Christ is at work in the revolutions of contemporary Asia ... The Church must mot only discern Christ in the changing life but be there in it, responding to him and making his presence and Lordship known.

Statements like these marked the phase in ecumenical history in which God's "preferential option for the poor" was more and more realized. An example from the World Conference on Church and Society, 1966, which said:

> If the Christian community wishes to live out its faith in the worldwide community, it must put its weight on the side of the oppressed. However, the strength of its witness must not be used to enhance its own prestige and security. Its most telling power resides in its vulnerability, its willingness to risk its reputation, its wealth, its status, even its life for the sake of the needy and the poor.

This line was continued at the Nairobi Assembly, 1975:

> The prophetic word of Jaweh's drawing near ro the humble, to the powerless, finds an echo in fundamental passages of the Gospel ... The Gospel has been brought to the poor, to the powerless, to the oppressed, to the captives, to the sick. In the person of Jesus, Jaweh has put himself decidedly in the place of the poor ... In spite of our apparent powerlessness we must keep alive faith so that we hasten the day when "justice will flow like water." We are not faithful to Jesus Christ when we submit to the powers that be: at that moment we become captives of the powers that have been defeated by Christ.

The Assembly therefore said: "We urge the member churches to plan their participation in development to be primarily in support of the poorest of the poor ..."

The challenge of Kuala Lumpur - to discern how Christ is at work in history - is still valid. Combined with the emphasis on solidarity with the poor, it means that churches should take the peoples' struggles for justice as the clue for identifying their own role in society. This recognition leads to some pressing questions for the churches:

- Can churches arrive at a common understanding of historical reality, Could they agree on basic criteria to evaluate historical processes?

- The people, the poor, often do not speak with one voice. How can churches come to grips with this reality?

- To what extent are people's struggles for justice part of an eschatological process?

- The concern for justice is by no means a monopoly for Christians. How can churches relate, in this struggle, to people of other faiths and ideologies?

- The World Conference on Church and Society, 1966, invited churches to risk vulnerability. To what extent have mainstream churches and Christian groups taken this invitation seriously? Where has a theology of kenosis ("self-emptying") developed and lived out in practice?

Questions and challenges like these put Christians in an uncomfortable position. Sitting on the fence is impossible. But challenges like these have to be taken extremely seriously if we want to respond to the call to first "search for the Kingdom of God and his justice" (Matt. 6:33).

JUSTICE, PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

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THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT AND PEACE POSITIONS
A Discussion Paper

I. THE CONTEXT

As we consider the World Council of Churches' peace positions and their evolution, an appropriate contextual setting is found in these introductory words from the Statement on Peace and Justice at the 6th Assembly of the WCC (Vancouver 1983).

> Humanity is now living in the dark shadow of an arms race more intense, and of systems of injustice more widespread, more dangerous and more costly than the world has ever known. Never before has the human race been as close as it is now to total self-destruction. Never before have so many lived in the grip of deprivation and oppression...
>
> ...we are moved to repentance as we consider with alarm the rapidity with which the threats to justice and survival have grown since we last met...

More than one bomb

It offers little joy to speculate that the atomic bomb is not the only dangerous bomb threatening our world today. Other "bombs" which threaten peace, justice, and the integrity of creation are :

- the population explosion (perhaps 6 billion people by the year 2000)
- the hunger bomb which daily kills more than are dying in current wars
- the ecological bomb (dying trees, endangered species, erosion, pollution etc) which is exacting its toll over much of creation

- the economic bomb - "..We believe that the present military build-up and arms race are integrally related to the practices of an unjust world economic order." (Vancouver Report).

Of course there are other "bombs" - too many to name. We are only beginning to realise the degree to which these are all tied together like one big cluster bomb. This in fact is what the WCC has been saying in a clear voice, especially since the 6th Assembly in Vancouver. It was out of such converging concerns that a new and courageous initiative was born at the 1984 Central Committee meeting - a "Programme on linking the struggles for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation."

II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Any reading of ecumenical documents makes it very clear that every WCC Assembly (beginning with Amsterdam, 1948) has challenged Christians and the churches to dedicate themselves to the cause of justice and peace. But it should also be remembered that the ecumenical movement was already very much involved in peace and justice concerns long before the WCC was formed in 1948. The Life and Work Conference meeting at Stockholm in 1925 made an appeal to the churches to renew their efforts in behalf of peace and justice. The appeal was renewed at the Oxford Conference of Church, Community and State (July 1937) - at one point even pronouncing "condemnations of war unqualified and unrestricted." (J.H. Oldham, editor, The Oxford Conference)

CCIA director Ninan Koshy reminds us of this larger historical perspective in these words :

> From the very beginning of this century concern for peace and disarmament played a significant part in the shaping of the ecumenical movement. In its formative stage the WCC was confronted with the problems posed by the Second World War which made a mark on its thinking and the style of its response.

With this background in mind, let us try to highlight the WCC's main peace positions which have come from the respective WCC Assemblies.

III. THROUGH THE ASSEMBLIES

(The First Assembly - Amsterdam, 1948)

With memories of World War II still very much alive, the First Assembly declared in the form of a confession, and affirmation, that

> ...War, being a consequence of the disregard of God, is not inevitable if man will turn to Him in repentance and obey His law. There is, then, no irresistable tide that is carrying man to destruction. Nothing is impossible with God...

The assembly then issued its strong and now well-known statement that

> War as a method of settling disputes is incompatible with the teaching and example of our Lord Jesus Christ. The part which war plays in our present international life is a sin against God and a

degradation of man. We recognize that the problem of war raises especially acute issues for Christians today. Warfare has greatly changed. War is now total, and every man and woman is called for mobilisation in war service...

Because war had now clearly become "indiscriminate" in its destructive power, the assembly went on to question the old just war theory. "In these circumstances the tradition of a just war, requiring a just cause and the use of just means, is now challenged."

The assembly left many questions unanswered. For example, no clear conclusion was reached about "just war" (see section V), but the theme of the deliberations was still that war "...is a sin against God and a degradation of man."

If anything typified the mood of the delegates in their concern for peace, it was their deep desire to move beyond the rubble and tragedy of the recent world wars and to work together to discover the roots and causes of human conflict. "The greatest threat to peace today comes from the division of the world into mutually suspicious and antagonistic blocs." The need to look beyond national interests was recognized. Strong emphasis was given to theimportance of international law which all nations should respect. The United Nations was looked up to with hope. The churches' responsibility in this effort was seen to be in helping to lay "that common foundation of moral conviction without which any system of law will break down." Churches should also "support immediate practical steps for fostering mutual understanding and goodwill among the nations..."

(The Second Assembly - Evanston, 1953)

After the bold statement from the First Assembly, condemning war as "contrary to the will of God," the Evanston Assembly was relatively quiet on the question. Nevertheless, the Report of Section IV on International Affairs stated :

> It is not enough for the churches to proclaim that war is evil. They must study afresh the Christian approaches to peace, taking into account both Christian pacifism as a mode of witness and the conviction that in certain circumstances military action is justifiable.

Dialogue encouraged as peacekeeping measure

East-West tensions were still very strong, and the Assembly urged "governments and the peoples to continue to speak to one another, to avoid rancour and malice, and to look for ways by which fear and suspicion may be removed."

Peace is more than absence of war

> "'Peace' means far more than mere 'absence of war'; it is characterized positively by freedom, justice, truth and love."

Nuclear Testing - The assembly did not totally condemn nuclear testing, but insisted "that nations carry on tests only within their respective territories..." (Section IV report)

At Evanston one could not help but feel the cool breeze of the emerging Cold War. Thus a strong emphasis was made throughout on the need to build trust and to support structures which contribute to international law. Not surprisingly considerable cold war tension was also felt by delegates when East-West matters were discussed. This may have been one reason why Evanston did not speak as specifically on an "anti-war theme" as Amsterdam. This perhaps also influenced the Assembly at times to speak more in personal terms than politically about peacemaking.

> ...it follows that the first responsibility of Christians is to live and work for reconciliation of men to God and, therefore, as individuals and nations, to one another...

(Third Assembly, New Delhi, 1961)

The Third Assembly re-emphasised the urgent need for the churches to engage in efforts for peace.

> There is no more urgent task for Christians than to work together for community within nations and for peace with justice and freedom among them, so that the causes of much contemporary misery may be rooted out.

Protest against arms race / no first use of nuclear weapons

> Churches must protest against the accelerating arms race...Christians must press most urgently upon their governments as a first step towards the elimination of nuclear weapons, never to get into a position in which they contemplate the first use of nuclear weapons... (Report on Service)

Mutual confidence and trust building essential / must be universal

> To build peace with justice, barriers of mutual distrust must be attacked at every level. Mutual confidence is the most precious resource in the world today...A creative strategy for peace with justice requires universal recognition of the claims of humanity - of all people, whatever their status, race, sex, or creed. (From An Appeal to Governments and Peoples)

Even if little new or unique was stated as a peace position at New Delhi, the desire to move from "theory to action" was very visible. Examples :

> 1) the Assembly's Appeal to All governments and Peoples
> 2) the authorization of the convening of a consultation under the title, "The Christian's Witness to Peace."

(Fourth Assembly - Uppsala, 1968)

The Fourth Assembly reflected a growing recognition of the complexity of peacemaking and working for justice. Along with the nuclear threat (plus the threat of chemical and biological weapons), such issues as racism, poverty, and underdevelopment were more clearly seen to be barriers to peace and justice. To meet these multi-threats the Assembly sensed the need for

re-dedication to Christian unity and cooperation at all levels.

The Assembly also welcomed "agreement among the great powers on the Non-Proliferation Treaty as an important step towards averting nuclear disasters..." It was not recognized at that time by the WCC that the Treaty was essentially discriminatory, and would not prevent massive build-up of nuclear weapons by the nuclear-weapon states.

What was perhaps a new emphasis at Uppsala was the deep concern expressed for the rights of all groups in the process of effecting peaceful social change. "All peoples have the right to self-determination...But majorities must recognize that as well as rights, they have a responsibility for providing the widest possible freedom for their minorities, and minorities also must recognize that majorities also have rights."

As a part of the Martin Luther King Resolution the Assembly asked the Central Committee to "explore means by which the WCC could promote studies on non-violent methods of achieving social change..."

(The Fifth Assembly - Nairobi, 1975)

At Nairobi the old East-West/Northern Hemisphere disarmament debate no longer held the position it did at earlier assemblies. As CCIA director Ninan Koshy saw it, "The arms race had already distorted social and economic priorities in all countries but affected the poor countries in specially adverse ways." The Assembly made a major effort to analyse the multi-nature of the threats to peace. Militarism had become almost a "way of life" in many countries, and a new approach to peacemaking and theological analysis was called for. An Appeal to the Churches included the following point :

> We call upon the new Central Committee to initiate steps to organize a consultation on disarmament. This consultation should investigate and compare available material on the factors producing the present arms race and the technological, economic, environmental, and military implications...

Undoubtedly the strongest statement of all was this admonition and challenge to the churches :

> Christians must resist the temptation to resign themselves to a false sense of impotence of security. The churches should emphasize their readiness to live without the protection of armaments... (from the Statement by the WCC's Vth Assembly, Nairobi, 1975)

IV. VANCOUVER ASSEMBLY POSITIONS - 1983

At Vancouver a clear and unmistakable cry for peace and justice was heard. "The peoples of the world are coming to their feet in growing numbers, demanding justice, crying out for peace. These are the present signs of hope." This Assembly, more than any before, posed in bleak terms the converging global dangers and threats facing humankind :

A. Nuclear weapons / new breed of conventional weapons

> ...nuclear weapons claim victims even in the absence of war, through the lasting effects of nuclear bombings, weapons testing...
>
> ...The growing sophistication, accuracy and mobility of new generations of weapons...make them more dangerous and destabilizing than ever...

The nuclear and "conventional" threat was seen as related, the distinction blurred. "As the opposition to nuclear weapons grows, new non-nuclear or so-called conventional weapons of mass destruction develop at frightening speed."

B. Militarism

The 6th Assembly noted a frightening growth in the arms race. But the concern was not just about the growth in weapons systems. It was also about the radical way in which militarism is changing the basic priorities of entire societies in much of the world.

> "Priorities have been dangerously distorted. Attention has been drawn away from the fundamental rights and needs of poor nations and of the poor within the rich nations."

C. Economic threat - relation to militarism and arms race

> "While the equivalent of nearly two billion dollars (US) is being expended globally each day for armaments, the world economy is engulfed in a prolonged and deepening crisis which threatens every country and international security. The spectre of trade warfare, competitive devaluation and financial collapse is omnipresent...
>
> ...profitable trade in conventional weapons has nearly doubled in the past five years, a very large part of it in the directon of the developing nations and regions where armed conflict already defies containment...
>
> Even without war, thousands perish daily in nations both rich and poor because of hunger and starvation..." (Vancouver Report)

D. Security and Justice

Narrow and false perceptions of security were seen as contributing to repression, injustice - and thus more insecurity.

> "The blatant misuse of the concept of national security to justify repression, foreign intervention and spiraling arms budgets is of profound concern..."

The Assembly said "Security can be achieved only as a common enterprise of nations but security is also inseparable from justice. A concept of 'common security' of nations must be reinforced by a concept of 'people's security'. True security for the people demands respect for human rights, including the

right to self-determination, as well as social and economic justice for all within every nation and a political framework that would ensure it.

Other inter-related threats to peace and justice were named : hunger and starvation, human rights violations, continuing nuclear weapons testing etc.

What was new at Vancouver?

While the Vancouver Assembly re-affirmed many of the WCC's former peace positions, it also went beyond them in several ways.

The relationship between peace and justice was re-emphasised, but spelled out with clearer meaning and stronger conviction than heretofore. The interrelationship had been established before,

> ...it was only at the Sixth Assembly, that we made the connection of justice and peace as matter of clear conviction and also an inescapable task. 'Peace is not just the absence of war - Peace cannot be built on foundations of injustice. Peace requires a new international order based on justice for and within all the nations and respect for the God-given humanity and dignity of every person...'

Total condemnation of nuclear weapons, including production, deployment, use of.
Though nuclear weapons had been condemned before, Vancouver established a much stronger and comprehensive position. Adopting the declaration expressed by the 1981 Amsterdam Public Hearing on Nuclear Weapons and Disarmament the Assembly confirmed :

> We believe that the time has come when the churches must unequivocally declare that the production and deployment as well as the use of nuclear weapons are a crime against humanity and that such activities must be condemned on ethical and theological grounds.

No justification for nuclear deterrence. The Assembly declared that

> Nuclear deterrence, as the strategic doctrine which has justified nuclear weapons in the name of security and war prevention, must now be categoricaly rejected as contrary to our faith in Jesus Christ who is our life and peace.

Call for new, truly ecumenical approach

The multi-threats to peace demand renewed unity of commitment and unity. A wholistic approach is more than ever necessary because the many combined forces which threaten peace (militarism, economic factors, racism, human rights abuse, oppression etc.) have become too closely intertwined to treat separately.

> "The ecumenical approach to peace and justice is based on the belief that without justice for all everywhere we shall never have peace anywhere."

Peace-making an issue of faith

The Assembly gave a strong call for a renewed confession of faith and witness. Justice and peace received virtual "confessional status".

> "The churches today are called to confess anew their faith, and to repent for the times when Christians have remained silent in the face of injustice or threats to peace..."

Churches were encouraged to :

- intensify their efforts to develop a common witness in a divided world, confronting with renewed vigour the threats to peace and survival and engaging in struggles for justice and human dignity;

- become a living witness to peace and justice through prayer, worship and concrete involvement...

And to support :

- a mutual and verifiable freeze on the development, testing, production, and deployment of nuclear weapons...
- completion of a Test Ban Treaty

- the negotiation of a treaty providing for the total demilitarization of space, including the banning of all nuclear, anti-satellite and anti-missle systems in space.

- commitment by all nuclear-weapon states to a policy of no first use of nuclear weapons...

V. ELABORATION OF POSITIONS

Although there is no single unbroken line in the development of the WCC's peace positions, there is nevertheless one prevailing stream flowing throughout all the assemblies. This is the WCC's undeniable concern and desire for peace and justice.

Amsterdam's (1948) conviction that "war is contrary to the will of God" was obviously sharpened by the memory of World War II which had just ended. But the concern for peace was already there long before the WCC was formed.

Though Amsterdam condenmed war as contrary to the will of God, it also recognized the wide differences held by the churches vis-à-vis the question of war as a means of achieving justice. After denouncing war the Assembly then raised the question, "Can war now be an act of justice? We cannot answer this question unanimously." Three broad positions are mentioned (reminiscent of the ecumenical "trilemma" at Oxford) :

1) there are those who hold that, even though entering a war may be a Christian's duty in particular circumstances, modern warfare, with its

mass destruction, can never be an act of justice.

2) In the absence of impartial supra-national institutions, there are those who hold that military action is the ultimate sanction of the rule of law...

3) Others, again, refuse military service of all kinds, convinced that an absolute witness against war and for peace is for them the will of God...

The Assembly then confessed, "We must frankly acknowledge our deep sense of perplexity in face of these conflicting opinions..."

Between Amsterdam and Evanston (1953) the Korean war and the continuing cold war both added contextual content to the churches' thinking about peace and justice. In 1951 the CCIA issued a statement entitled "Churches stand for Peace", declaring that "we must neither purchase peace at the price of tyranny nor in the name of justice look on war as a way to justice or as a ground of hope."

This statement is reflected in the Second Assembly's oft-quoted position that "'peace' means far more than the mere 'absence' of war." In fact it was at Evanston that one noticed the emerging theme, "no peace without justice" which has appeared in some form at each Assembly since.

The Second Assembly also began to see clearly the increasing danger of nuclear weapons against the background of cold war mentality. An appeal was made "...urging the prohibition of all weapons of mass destruction under the provision of international inspection and control along with the reduction of all types of armaments." Soon after the Assembly the CCIA Executive Committee issued a "Statement on Disarmament and Peaceful Change" which advocated a system of inspection, along with step by step ways to reduce tensions in troubled areas.

Between Evanston and New Delhi (1961) the WCC appointed a special commission to study "the prevention of war in an atomic age." In 1957 a key statement was adopted by the CCIA Executive Committee, setting forth a programme on disarmament which featured a ban on atomic tests as the first step related to a larger strategy to establish a framework for future action on the disarmament question.

In this period WCC sentiment in favour of a general test ban was matched by a swelling demand by the churches for general disarmament. These concerns formed a major theme at the Third Assembly (1961). In an "appeal to all governments and peoples" the Assembly stated :

> To halt the race in arms is imperative. Complete and general disarmament is the accepted goal, and concrete steps must be taken to reach it. Meanwhile, the search for a decisive first step, such as the verified cessation of nuclear tests, should be pressed forward despite all obstacles and setbacks.

The 1964 meeting of the WCC Executive Committee (Odessa, USSR) welcomed the long awaited Limited Test Ban Treaty of 1963 as a real step toward international security. But in 1968 the Uppsala Assembly warned of the increasing danger resulting from ongoing proliferation and of the temptation to accept the "present nuclear stalement." In 1973 the CCIA issued a very significant "Position Paper on Disarmament", calling somber attention to the rapid "militarization of the world."

The statement on disarmament, adopted by the Executive Committee of the CCIA at its meeting in Hungary makes a new departure, for three reasons

- it breaks out of the framework of super-power confrontation and analyses the fallacy of the traditional approach to disarmament issues, substituting progressively 'arms control' for a genuine disarmament

- it identifies the arms race and arms trade as symptoms of a basic misallocation of social resources and as part of the wider threat to peace arising from global structures of injustice

- it unmasks the fallacy of the arguments for 'national security' in view of the situation where armaments far exceed the requirements of self-defence.

With this statement the piece-meal, sectional pragmatic approach to disarmament issues is overcome.

A second statement was issued in 1975. These studies and statements by the CCIA helped provide a full agenda for the Fifth Assembly (Nairobi, 1975) which called upon the Central Committee to organise a consultation on disarmament. From this emerged two important meetings held in 1978 : A Consultation on Militarism and The Conference on Disarmament. These meetings provided much "input" for the Vancouver Assembly (1983) where the new integral programme emphasis JPIC was launched.

Vancouver's positions have already been considered in some detail. However, in capsule form one might say that the Sixth Assembly itself was the summary of all peace and justice positions taken by the WCC through the years. At this Assembly an attempt was made to include all the major streams of thought on peace and justice since the WCC began, including :

- the inter-relationship of peace, justice, economic factors, human rights, human dignity
- the importance of unity and solidarity to our task
- the imperative of stopping the arms race and the militarization process
- the urgency of finding peaceful means to settle conflicts
- the imperative of establishing priorities / the spiritual centrality of true worship as opposed to the idolatries which too often dominate our lives
- the recognition that true security comes only from God and that it must go beyond narrow national security to a security for all people of if is to be real and lasting

Thus Vancouver's most unique contribution was its insistence on converging the struggles for peace against the convergence of threats against it. The VIth Assembly also went beyond previous Assemblies in its total rejection of nuclear weapons, and even of deterrence. By contrast, the Evanston Assembly had still condoned limited atomic testing.

These are some of the important elements coming out of Vancouver, but we recall that they were forged, formed and molded at all Assemblies and ecumenical meetings which went before.

VI. THEOLOGICAL POSITIONS

Introduction

The World Council of Churches' theological positions on peace should be seen as expressions coming from the Council's overall theological thinking, and not as something unrelated or apart, as though peace and justice were matters to be covered by a "separate theology". At the same time, it should be remembered that the WCC's very formation itself was strongly influenced by peace concerns, as was pointed out earlier. Indeed, the Oxford Conference sounded the tone for peace, the essence of which was to be repeated at WCC Assemblies and other ecumenical gatherings.

> War is a particular demonstration of the power of sin in this world and a defiance of the righteousness of God as revealed in Jesus Christ and him crucified. No justification of war must be allowed to conceal or minimize this fact. (Oxford Report)

Just a glance at the various Assembly themes will indicate how Christo-centric the Council has been in its overall theological approach and stance ("Jesus Christ Frees and Unites", "Jesus Christ - the Life of the World" etc). The Uppsala Assembly exclaimed, "Christ is our Peace!...The Word of God testifies that in Christ God makes peace on earth."

Of course, Christo-centricity is what one would expect from a body which is by definition a Council of Christian Churches. Without adopting any one emphasis (such as "Heilsgeschichte") as a system, "WCC theology" has nevertheless been centered on the basic themes of "salvation history", the story of God's mighty acts among his people : Creation, Covenant, Redemption, Exodus, Incarnation, Resurrection, Pentecost, Holy Spirit, the Community of God's People etc. For Christians all these mighty acts of God are to be seen, and interpreted, through the "Christ Event" and not the other way around. Christians generally agree that moral and ethical teachings from the Old Testament are also to be interpreted christologically, via the Christ Event. This emphasis itself surely ought to have a powerful impact on thoughts about peace and justice as we become aware that we are "doing our theology" through, and with Him whom we also know as the Prince of Peace. This was intimated at Vancouver when we said, "As believers in the one Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, we are stewards of God's hope for the future of creation."

Called to Covenant Relationships

When at Vancouver (1983) we were called as churches and Christians to enter into covenant relationships one with another we should understand that we were

not called simply to closer relationships or warmer relationships, as valid as these may be. Rather we were called to covenant together before God, committing ourselves to reconciliation, justice and peace at every level of life. Our commitment is not just to principles and causes, but to a Person - to Christ who is our peace, our New Covenant written on the heart, and no longer on tablets of stone. This is the Living Covenant confirmed by Jesus' life and ministry, then fully re-confirmed by the Resurrected Christ who took earthly leave of his disciples only after one final promise and covenant :

> All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things...Peace I leave with you; I do not give you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not be afraid. (John 14:25-27).

Though the fuller meaning of these words of Jesus seems to be eschatological - a God-given peace which is not the result of our plans and political decisions - we nevertheless dare not discount the obvious continuity, for the same Jesus called us to be peacemakers now in his New Community, the Community of the Covenant. In this covenant community we are called to be co-workers with Christ for peace and shalom in the world. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." (Mt. 5:9)

Commenting on the relationship between the "here and now" and the "beyond" Roger Shinn reminded us at the Hearing that :

> ...if eschatology becomes other worldly, quite spiritualized, we have missed much of what the Hebrew and Christian scriptures are about. On the one hand, if we think that the peace that passeth understanding can be negotiated through international agreements we have missed something else. It is that relationship between what we have seen in Christ and what we expect that the church is concerned about.

As churches engage "in a conciliar process commitment to Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation", they will of course have different interpretations of basic biblical teachings. They will also differ in their understanding of "conciliar". The WCC recognizes this, but strongly discourages using our differences as "excuses" for not engaging in the JPIC process.

> Each church is asked to participate in this process by expressing itself in the strongest form of ecclesial commitment to justice, peace and the integrity of creation. Hence, no one concept of ecclesial commitment is being imposed on all...Diversity in expressing the one apostolic faith...is recognized and affirmed. (Central Comm. report, Jan. 1987)

A Theology of Justice and Peace - Toward a Consensus?

This question will be further touched on in section VIII of this report. It is obviously too soon to say that the churches are close to a consensus on this important question. Nevertheless, Vancouver reflected the churches moving closer to basic agreements on some major points. Virtually all member churches (including "historic peace churches") are in basic agreement with the Assembly's new position that Christians must now reject :

- nuclear war in any form, "limited" or otherwise
- nuclear deterrence
- the production and deployment of nuclear weapons
- any participation in conflicts involving weapons of mass destruction or of indiscriminate effect

The Assembly reiterated the conviction of the Amsterdam Hearing "We believe that the time has come when the churches must unequivocally declare that the production and deployment as well as the use of nuclear weapons are a crime against humanity and that such activities must be condemned on ethical and theological grounds. The nuclear weapons issue is, in its import and threat to humanity, a question of Christian discipline and faithfulness to the Gospel". The basis for rejection of nuclear deterrence was spelt out in the Assembly's Report on "Confronting Threats to Peace and Survival" :

> Nuclear deterrence, as the strategic doctrine which has justified nuclear weapons in the name of security and war production must now be categorically rejected as contrary to our faith in Jesus Christ who is our life and peace. Nuclear deterrence is morally unacceptable because it relies on the credibility of the intention to use nuclear weapons : we believe that any intention to use weapons of mass destruction is an utterly inhuman violation of the mind and spirit of Christ which should be in us.

Granted, this common rejection was not only on theological/ethical grounds, but was also made for pragmatic reasons (nuclear weapons make us less secure, not more). Granted also - the "peace churches" would hope that the position will later be broadened to include all war and all weapons. Still, it is significant that earlier Assemblies were not even able to agree on these important issues which they now have adopted as a position.

As a step toward consensus-building, Vancouver invited the churches to a more "peaceful way" of doing our theology together. In suggesting a conciliar process of mutual commitment to justice, peace and the integrity of creation, the Assembly invited the churches, in effect, to form a new confessing church. This call should be considered a definite step toward consensus -- if not in terms of ideas, then at least in terms of spirit.

Concept of God

Much has been written on the differing concepts of God held by churches and Christians. Of course the gap is still wide in interpretations and understandings. The limits of this paper do not allow for long discussion on this point. However, it would seem that this very important question may not be the greatest one keeping us from consensus on a "theology of peace." Most WCC theological statements relating to peace and justice could be endorsed by the "historic peace churches". The latter would rather question certain "disclaimers" which often follow the statements - such as conceding that war may in some cases be the "lesser of two evils," "the only resort left," etc. Granted, there are still some "ultra fundamentalistic" churches which openly endorse "warrior-God theology." WCC member churches should seek dialogue with such churches when possible. However, this "argument" is hardly the real issue among WCC member churches. The central question would seem to be how we "translate" and live out the "God is Love/Peace/Justice Theology" to which

virtually all (can think of no exception) WCC member churches subscribe, at least in theory and in liturgical expression. The real question is how we bring our "God is Love" theology into the real, hard world of human conflict - including the concept of love for enemies. This is not meant to gloss over real differences (see section VIII).

But it would seem that the main issue we face is related to the Christian call to obedience. This was recognized at Vancouver :

> The churches are called to confess anew their faith, and to repent for the times when Christians have remained silent in the face of injustice of threats to peace.

The challenge was prophetically given in an address by Raymond G. Hunthausen, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Seattle, Washington - later quoted by Philip Potter in his speech at the Amsterdam Hearing.

> As followers of Christ, we need to take up our cross in the nuclear age...Our security as people of faith lies not in demonic weapons which threaten all life on earth. Our security is in a loving caring God. We must dismantle our weapons of terror and place our reliance on God. ("Before it's Too Late," p.38)

The Vancouver Assembly gave virtual consensus to statements similar to the one above. Could it be that the real weakness in the peace witness of our churches is not as much in their avowed theological positions as in their (our) commitment to carry through on them no matter what the price?

The Yes to Peace and Shalom

While our strong no to war, violence, injustice and oppression must be unrelenting, our warm yes to peace and shalom must find ever-increasing expression.

Together with our Jewish friends, we still find a wealth of meaning and inspiration in the Old Testament concept of shalom. The word in Hebrew presents a multi-hued picture of peace, justice, freedom and well-being all fused together. In its widest sense shalom paints a picture of earthly, even cosmic, order and harmony. In the beginning God's garden of shalom (Eden) provided every human need. Creation was pronounced "good" and it was made clear that humankind was to be creation's steward and care-taker.

Shalom is concerned for the well-being of each individual as well as for the society as a whole. It seeks justice for the oppressed and liberty for the captive. Shalom is God's gift, but it also calls for our personal dedication and commitment - along with a sense of being called - to do its working.

> The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour... (Isaiah 61).

It is thus seen that the Christian understanding of justice and peace owes very much to the Old Testament concept of shalom. For Jew and Christian alike few words inspire a more hopeful and beautiful symbol of peace and well-being than this passage from Micah :

> He will teach us his ways,
> so that we may walk in his paths...
> He will judge between many peoples
> and will settle disputes for strong
> nations far and wide.
> They will beat their swords into
> ploughshares and their spears into
> pruning hooks.
> Nation will not take up sword against nation,
> nor will they train for war any more.
> Every man will sit under his own vine
> and under his own fig-tree, and no-one
> will make them afraid...
> (Micah 4:2-4)

However, the Christian witness for peace finds its central basis at the heart of the gospel's message, "The Kingdom of God has drawn near. Repent and believe the good news" (Mark 1:15). The gospel proclaims God's dominion and rule in human life. We are assured that human history is always encountered by God's Kingdom of Peace and Justice which is already "among you", though not fully here and not plainly visible - and certainly not yet widely accepted or understood.

These words from Günther Krusche are illuminating and instructive :

> The church's witness for peace is based on discipleship. Something of this renewal of human relationships already comes to expression in the words of Jesus : love towards enemies, fellowship between the divided, reconciliation and not revenge. These are not simply ethical directives for a select few, but signs of the new order in a world of distrust, sin and death... Could it not be that these signs of hope make more sense today than the "jus talionis" (Matt. 5:38), which up to now has only brought us the absurdities of the arms race and set the military commanders searching only for possibilities of new and even more effective means of deterrence?
>
> The church's witness for peace becomes therefore a sign of hope in a world still dominated by the law of revenge and the principle that might is right, a world which in consequence plunges ever deeper into hatred and distrust. We accept the task which this implies for the Church. Our witness for peace must become a service of peace.
>
> (from "Before it's Too Late", Amsterdam Hearing)

VII. INTERLINKAGES WITH JUSTICE, INTEGRITY OF CREATION

After Vancouver it might almost seem contradictory to speak of "interlinkage" when referring to the concepts inherent in JPIC. The formulation at the Sixth

Assembly is new and unique in that the three elements - justice, peace and integrity of creation - are no longer seen as three separate entities in the same way as before, but now as belonging together in a new inseparable bond which never should have been fragmented in the first place.

Nevertheless, while keeping this integral image in mind, it is perhaps still necessary to try to picture or define some of the different elements which are involved. As it is not possible here to attempt long philosophical definitions, only brief impressions, examples and images will be given as recalled from various WCC statements and discussions.

Justice

No "pure" definition can be given. We confess that we know little about real justice - God's justice. But even if justice cannot be definied adequately, it is not difficult to see the effects of its opposite - injustice :

- apartheid, racism
- violation of human rights
- oppression, repression, domination
- poverty in the midst of weal
- lack of power sharing etc.

One impression of justice came from the Sodepax-sponsored Consultation on Christian Concern for Peace (Baden, Austria, 1970).

> ...justice in which - as an essential condition for peace - each individual can enjoy the respect due to his person as a human being and every man, without discrimination, and in full equality with other men, might have access to all civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights...

Beyond all definitions is Divine Justice, embracing :

- God's righteousness and love
- God's covenant promise
- God's order and judgement

Peace

Like justice, our understanding of peace is very fragmented. Our definitions of peace are far too small and narrow. The WCC recognized this when it stated its oft-repeated position that "Peace is not just the absence of war - peace cannot be built on the foundations of injustice."

The Sixth Assembly went on to say that "Peace is, as the prophet Isaiah has taught us, the effect of righteousness."

The Conference on Disarmament (CCIA, 1978) stated "The Christian concern for peace is grounded in our human participation in the loving purposes of God for his whole creation. He wills to serve up all things in Christ by whose cross and resurrection peace has become possible for all...The peace we seek is a 'warm' peace, not merely the absence of war, but a peace best defined in the biblical word 'shalom' (see earlier section, "The Yes to Peace and Shalom")

which expresses a positive state of justice, mutual respect for differences, welfare, health, security and a community embracing all humanity, in which there is loving concern for all."

As a "working definition" a number of WCC papers have defined peace as shalom, the Old Testament concept which is also beyond clear definition, but which embraces such images as :

- God's covenant (promise) to all humankind and all creation
- cosmic unity and wholeness
- harmony and order
- community and solidarity
- salvation, justification and redemption
- well-being and justice
- freedom, liberation

Of course these images are idealistic. But then, so is peace.

Integrity of Creation

As we look at this new concept there are obviously no clear precedents to go by. The term includes many of the same elements as justice and peace. Again, the concept is more easily defined in the negative sense - the "abuse" or "absence" of integrity of creation :

- exploitation of nature, of other persons and groups / waste / land speculation for profit / lack of stewardship over resources
- nuclear radiation, fallout, danger of "nuclear winter"
- pollution of land, water, air
- disregard for "aboriginal" groups which reject private ownership of land

Thus "integrity of creation" might be defined very much like shalom itself, including images as :

- wholeness of life and community / recognition of oneness of creation
- the preservation and care of nature
- beauty and order
- stewardship and peacemaking which oppose arms production which in turn robs resources and oppresses the poor

This only hints at some of the elements which might belong to the concept of "integrity of creation". Much more study and reflection must be done.

Inter-relationships

The inter-relationships between peace and justice are already quite well established in many WCC documents coming from various Assemblies.

Examples :

The First Assembly (1948) challenged the "just war" as a means of achieving justice and peace. It also recognized that injustice is the major cause of wars (and thus the denial of peace), and held that the "churches must attack

the causes of war by promoting peaceful change and the pursuit of justice."

The Second Assembly (1954) recognized that peace cannot be real or lasting without "the establishment of justice based on a rule of law..."

A prelude to JPIC (interlinkage) was sounded at Evanston in these words :

> Through the life, service and sacrifice of their members, they (the churches) must make their contribution to justice and peace, to the improvement of human conditions and to the care of the needy and of the refuge. They must serve humbly the needs of the less developed peoples.

The Third Assembly (New Delhi, 1961) mentioned the interlinkage of peace and justice with racism, sexism and human dignity.

> A creative strategy for peace with justice requires universal recognition of the claims of humanity - of all people, whatever their status, race, sex, or creed. Lest man's new powers be used to degrade his human freedom and dignity, governments must remember that they are the servants of their citizens...

"Pre-JPIC" interlinkage could be discerned in the "Christian Insights" report at Uppsala (1968). Strong emphasis was placed on unity and interdependence.

> We Christians, who have often denied this unity, observe how through science and technology the world is being tied together in interdependence. The nations are thereby both threatened and made dependent on one another. This calls us to action oriented to the brotherhood of all men.

At Nairobi (1975) a sense of growing solidarity (almost mutual covenant) was felt, along with the need for action and risk-taking.

> The churches should emphasize their readiness to live without the protection of armaments, and take a signifiant initiative in pressing for effective disarmament.

Once again, the newness at Vancouver was not just the recognition of the inter-relationships of justice, peace and the integrity of creation - but rather that "the Assembly called for the uniting of struggles, for a fusion of the struggles."

VIII. QUESTIONS AND ISSUES FOR FURTHER STUDY

Theological Questions

1. The Christian and War

This subject has been raised in some manner at most Assemblies. But if there now seems to be more agreement (though not yet consensus) among the churches on a number of WCC theological peace and justice positions, there still appear to be some inconsistencies in the WCC's basic position on war in general. Lamar Gibble expressed this concern at the Ad Hoc Group meeting (CCIA) in Glion (1985) when he said, "...since its inception, the WCC, while agreeing that 'all war is sin,' has never been able to be very decisive on the question of the morality of war. Each time the issue is raised and debated the

consistent conclusion is that on this matter there are unresolved differences among Christians." Fortunately there are now some indications that this question is being more clearly faced since the Vancouver Assembly's total condemnation of Christian participation in any nuclear war, or preparation thereof. Not only that. The Assembly also condemned participation in any war involving "weapons of mass destruction." Noting another WCC statement to the effect that the difference between nuclear weapons and so-called conventional weapons is becoming more and more "blurred," it would seem that the churches are moving closer to a position opposing a Christian's participation in (at least most) "conventional" wars as well.

At the Amsterdam Hearing it was pointed out that "the churches should not pretend any kind of ethical superiority; they share the uncertainty of our so-called 'culture'. In spite of this they will have no choice but to speak in all humility but from within a fundamental prophetic ethical indignation". That nuclear weapons in some unique way give ground for such indignation was the clear message of our witnesses. It arises from the perception that there are major ethical differencies between nuclear weapons and all those which have preceded them. It was in the light of the special characteristics of nuclear weapons and fully recognized that there was no Christian consensus on the subject of war as such, that Amsterdam stated unequivocally that nuclear war fighting was morally wrong, whatever the circumstances.

The Amsterdam hearing raised the following questions :

1. If twentieth century concepts of total war have rendered much traditional thinking about just war doctrine obsolete, is it nevertheless still justifiable to condenm some forms of warfare as disproportionate and indiscriminate? In the event of escalation to nuclear war what would be the moral difference between first strike and retaliation? What are the theological and moral grounds for such judgements?

2. Christian attitudes to war have in the past developed in the context of conventional warfare. The development of nuclear weapons has started a process of formulation of Christian attitudes and approaches to war and pacifism?

Further questions may be added :

- With the increasing "blur" in destructive potential, how can we determine the dividing line between weapons of "mass destruction" and other weapons?

- How much should our theological decisions be determined by the level of potential destructive power and danger? How much by a concept of discipleship?

- How much place should pragmatic concerns have in forming theological positions?

2. Church-State relations / a Christian's loyalty

Amsterdam declared "that no state may claim absolute sovereignity or make laws without regard to the commandments of God and the welfare of mankind."

Further study on this question might consider

- a comparison of Romans 13 ("be subject to the governing powers...") and Revelation 13 (where the state becomes the persecutor of believers).
- the "legitimacy" or "illegitimacy" of governments. Who decides and how?
- situations calling for civil disobedience and resistance

Reference was made to the question of "the powers" at the Hearing, and again at Vancouver. Churches are taking a new look at its implications, especially in view of the growing use of torture (both by individuals and states) and systematic cruelty which defy explanation or description.

- Do we take too lightly the demonic powers at work in the world?
- What is meant by the "prince of the world" (John 12:31) that is at work? Or again, how do we understand Paul's words when he said that our struggle is not "against human enemies..., but against the sovereignities and the powers...who originate the darkness in this world, the spiritual army of evil in the heavens"? (Ephes. 6:12)

3. Deterrence - Disarmament - Security

Vancouver clearly condemned the concept of nuclear deterrence on theological and moral grounds. Also for pragmatic reasons. The Amsterdam Hearing affirmed that "all means leading to disarmament, both nuclear and conventional, should be welcomed as complementary and mutually reinforcing..."

While participants at the Hearing agreed on this point more consideration needs to be given to some of the implications for theology, and also to certain practical questions : How do we "practically" (politically) get on with disarmament? The following is just one example of differing views at the Hearing. One speaker, Günter Krusche, raised the question as to whether it might be time to "sharpen the conscience of the WCC member churches by declaring the use of nuclear weapons a 'status confessionis,' in the same way that apartheid was dealt with by the LWF at its assembly in Dar-es-Salaam in 1977." Another speaker, Roger Shinn (speaking about "unilateral action") said, "Even as a matter of theological and ethical theory, I do not think such an action desirable. It would not enhance the peace of the world." The viewpoints are not necessarily completely opposed. But the churches need to give more thought to the theological and political (security) implications involved in proposals for "unilateral action," in case the "ideal solution" of multilateral disarmament doesn't start happening more effectively. After Vancouver are the churches ready to implement their "no" to nuclear weapons (or other weapons of mass destruction), even to the extent of unilateral action if necessary? Can our "yes" to peace be strong enough to overcome the

forces of military mentality and enemy imagery? This means promoting the "peace process" within every local congregation. However it cannot be assumed that there is full consensus among the churches on nuclear deterrence.

Another complex of questions has been posed in various ways : Even if nuclear "deterrence" is eliminated, will this do away with "deterrence thinking", or only shift it to more "conventional forms"? Should deterrence concepts have any place in a Christian understanding of security?

4. Beyond the Violence / Non-Violence Dichotomy

The Report of the Corrymeela Consultation (following up the 1973 study on 'Violence, Non-Violence and the Struggle for Social Justice') said "The level of current debate about violence and non-violence in civil conflicts does not match the complexity of international situation today and the actual experience of people regarding the use of violence for political ends".

It was pointed out that this complexity makes it even more difficult today to draw up general guidelines for a Christian response in particular situations of violence. Traditional questions must be reopened, such as the criteria for legitimacy of power exercized by national governments and the individual right of resistance which may include violence against unjust structures. In moving beyond the simplistic violence/non-violence dichotomy attempts should be made to focus on the variety of ways in which power is exercised and the constructive possibilities inherent in each.

A few concluding remarks

The concern for peace played a significant part in the formation and shaping of the ecumenical movement and especially of the World Council of Churches. Over the years the WCC's understanding of peace and styles and methods of involvement in peace-making have evolved in terms of the Biblical understanding and in response to contemporaneous developments.

One of the most encouraging signs of the times is the deeper involvement of churches around the world in peace-making and their own creative exploration of the Biblical and theological basis for it. The World Council's role through the fellowship it offers has been to help all the Christians to know that they belong to one Lord, one faith and one baptism. The very nature of the Council which transcends national and ideological boundaries contributes to peace-making.

What is most significant is the emergence of the understanding that witness to peace is part of the confession of faith. It is integral to the witness of the church and demands new forms of unity among the churches.

This also demands that the churches should take a lead in helping to develop a new international ethos which not only provides a critique of the current order, but offers hopeful, rational alternatives. Work has already begun in some churches on the notion of "just peace" as counterpoint to traditional concepts of "just war".

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World Council of Churches
150, route de Ferney
1211 GENEVA 2
Reading room

JUSTICE, PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

Resource Materials 3.5

Message of Dr. Abisai Shejavali - General Secretary of the Council of Churches in Namibia

Dear Brothers and Sisters, and fellow Namibians at home and abroad, on May 4th, the 10th Anniversary of the massacre at Kassinga, I bring you this message, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Saviour.

Population control has been used by almost all oppressive minority governments as a means of reducing the numbers of the oppressed majority. In Namibia, the German troops reduced the Herero-Nama communities from a combined population of 120,000 to less than 40,000 between 1904 and 1908. We weep and refuse to be consoled when we reflect on the murder of Chief Mandume Ndemufayo and his warriors on 6 Feb. 1917. We weep for our heroes and refuse to be consoled when we think of the brutal suppression of the Rehoboth 'basters' uprising in 1925 and the innocent lives lost and immeasurable injuries inflicted when South Africa dropped bombs so indiscriminately on the villages of the Bondelswarts in Warmbad barely two years after Namibia was entrusted to her by the League of Nations.

In rural Namibia today, there is one doctor per 7,000 Africans while there is one doctor per 900 whites. In Namibia today, life expectancy for Africans is 48-52 years while for whites it is 70 years. In Namibia today, only 10% of African children reach secondary school while 68% of white children attend secondary school. In Namibia today, only 10% of African children finish primary school. In Namibia today, infant mortality among the Africans is 163 per 1000 while it is 12 per 1000 among the whites. In Namibia today, the African workers who work at Rossing mine - their compound is located at close proximity of the uranium's open pit mine - are thus exposed to this dangerous radiation. The white employees are housed at a safe distance from the uranium mine and are given frequent and thorough medical examinations.

Pharaoh of Egypt attempted the same program of racial extermination and genocide with the newly-born children of the Hebrew slave labourers. Our Namibian case -- particularly the Kassinga massacre -- shows that other colonial regimes are always fearful and therefore stop at nothing in trying to destroy the future of their oppressed, whom they always regard as a potential threat.

The estimated number of people killed instantly during the Kassinga raid was 582. In Kassinga a separate mass grave contains the bodies of over 120 children. Other victims died later at Angolan hospitals or in the bush. Over 200 survivors were abducted, tortured and some were kept for six years in Mariental military camp in Namibia. There were hundreds of others who are not accounted for to this day.

It makes us weep more bitterly when we know that the Western countries which like to speak so loudly of democracy and human rights actually collaborate with South Africa to perpetuate our suffering and delay our independence. It makes us weep more bitterly when we think particularly of the Reagan administration in the USA, the Thatcher governement in the United Kingdom and the Kohl coalition goverment in West Germany. We refuse to accept their hypocritical excuses that we, the Africans, would suffer most if mandatory sanctions are imposed on South Africa. We refuse to be consoled by spokespersons of these governments untill these governments have become reasonable in terms of human rights, or untill they are replaced by governments that will commit themselves to working for the elimination of apartheid in South Africa and for the independence of Namibia.

Like Rachel wailing and weeping in Ramah, we Namibians refuse to be consoled because:

- Many of our beloved ones are no more
- Many of our women folk have been left as widows
- Many of our men folk have been left as widowers
- Many children have been left as orphans
- Many marriages and families have been broken
- Mothers have been raped and youthful girls have been insulted and humiliated by the South African soldiers.
- We have many crippled and maimed members in our midst
- Many innocent civilians have been and are being killed, beaten up, detained without trail and tortured
- The night curfew causes much loss of life day after day
- Brother is made to fight brother
- Pupil is being paid to spy on teacher
- Parishioner is being paid to spy on priests/pastors
- The oppressed are being paid to announce propaganda on radio and TV
- Many cannot sleep at night because of the fear of the South African Security Forces.

Especially, we refuse to be flattered with empty words by the same people who in reality side with our Herods. We refuse to be comforted as long as our long-suffering is still there.

Herod in our text cunningly told the wise man that he would also like to meet and worship the newly-born king. In fact, he wanted to kill Jesus. The wise man were able to see through Herod's cunning plans. They were not misled. South Africa likes to mislead the world opinion that her 'Defence Forces' are in Namibia to protect Namibians from the terrorism of SWAPO. 'Defence protection' is the term she likes to use. The same term now has the opposite meaning in the vocabulary of the local Namibians, who themselves are the victims of this defence. The local population in Namibia fear the South African Security Forces, including the Koevoet, more than what one can describe in words. The local population in Namibia never mention their fear of SWAPO guerrillas. In the name of God, let this cunning lie now be challenged and denounced openly.

We cry and refuse to be comforted because we value and respect life, liberty, freedom and independence of all our people. We are children of God who are entitled to take our rightful place as a free people amongst the nations, and to worship God as his liberated children. That is why our cry for freedom is always directed to him: "In my distress I cry to the Lord, that he may answer me: deliver me, O Lord," (PS 120: 1-2A).

We also know well that God uses the human beings he created to put right that which is wrong. Our Namibian nations's cry is therefore a direct call to all people who believe in truth, love, peace, justice and democracy. What we ask from them is simple and clear: join us in the struggle for the establishment of peace and justice in Namibia. We wail and cry, not in self-pity or in despair, but in hope and hard labour of preparing for a new nation with a constitution based on the love of God and respect for a human person. We cry to God because the road to that new Namibia and just society is full of pains, trials, detentions and deaths. We refuse to be consoled until we finally reach there as a nation of black, white and brown, of all Namibians. Only then, will there be no more Kassingas, no more South African Defense Forces, no more Koevoets and no more fighting, and no more crying and weeping.

Let God, the Almighty, guide our feet along this road and may God bless us all.

Amen

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JUSTICE, PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

Resource Materials 3.6

CREATION: CARING OR CORRUPTING

Theme — Interdependence of human life and the resources of the earth and sea.

Aim: — To encourage a new awareness of the wholeness of creation and a new awareness of human responsibilities within creation.

Target Group: — Lay adults.

Duration: — 90 - 120 minutes.

Biblical Texts: — Key Text Genesis 1 : 28
Antithetical Text: Genesis 2 : 4-7, 15, 19.
Supporting Text: Genesis 1-3
Psalms 8, 19, 24, 65: 9-10, 68, 104.
Job 27 (esp. 23-24), 28 (esp. 9-12)
Romans 8: 22-23
Revelation 21: 1-4.

Backdrop:

There is a wholeness of creation and the responsibilities which humans are given, i.e. to be caretakers. However, as we see it, creation is broken and incomplete. Symptoms of this brokenness are e.g.:

Chernobyl Nuclear accident and Gas poisoning in Bhupal, India;
Nuclear resting in the Pacific Region;
Indiscriminate logging in Malaysia;
Pollution of air, rivers, lakes throughout SE Asia;
Consumerism;
Abortion of the female foetus in India

The ecological quality of the environment is declining. Humankind will need to drastically change their perceptions and values in order to reverse this decline with its inevitably pessimistic conclusion. July 11th 1987, has been designated "5 billionth baby day", to mark the reaching of a world population of 5 billion. The recently released State of the World Population Report asks whether reaching this level of population is a triumph for humankind or a threat to its future. While one possible path for the future leads to a balance between nature and human beings, another will lead to disaster unless birth and fertility rates are lowered.

God's caring for and nurturing of creation should lead us to be aware of the responsibility to do likewise. Integrity means wholeness - the integrity of

creation as a concept can serve as a basis for appropriate ethical action directed towards justice and peace. The Eucharist suggests to us that God and humankind co-operate in meeting human need, as illustrated in this offertory prayer:

> Blessed are you Lord, God of all creation,
> Through your goodness we have this bread (wine) to offer,
> Fruit of the earth (vine) and work of human hands.

Leader's Background:

It is likely that the brainstorming of Gen 1 will include also elements of the second creation narrative in Gen 2 & 3. The two accounts come out of quite separate and different OT traditions. Genesis 1 is from the Priestly writings of the period when the Hebrews were in exile in Babylon and the morale and the spirit of the people were low. The exilic priestly writer presents a creation story containing a blessing (1 : 28) which expresses the will of a creator God who will act to end the exile. The second account is from the earlier time of the United Kingdom of Israel when the life of the people was more settled. The key text, which speaks of humanity's dominion over the earth, poses a question for our contemporary situation: "To what extent can it be read - or has it been read - as a mandate to exploit the rest of creation?" It will be important to see that Gen 1 : 28 is balanced by a careful reading of 2: 4-7, 15; 19, where humanity is brought forth to nurture and care for the rest of creation.

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I. Suggested Opening Exercises - Choose ONE (10 mins)

(a) Gathering of United Nations ecology stamps for making collage and discussing;

(b) Collect newspaper, magazine pictures on ecology - variety depicting use of resources, pollution, relationship of human beings to creation;

(c) Slide presentation of ecological problems (consumer's asscn);

(d) Exploration exercise - Observe - Listen - Reflect; conduct field trip to building site, factory, river, lake, forest etc.

II. Main Activity (50 minutes)

(a) In pairs, without referring to your Bibles; share all you can remember of the first creation story in Gen 1 (5 min);

(b) In whole group share what you have remembered (5 min);

(c) Still in the whole group discuss how you understand the relationship between humankind and the rest of the created order. Reflect in the light of Gen 1: 28, 2: 4-7, and your introductory exercise;

(d) Divide into sub-groupings, each sub-group to take and discuss one of the following topics:

i Better ways of sharing resources;

ii How you see the future of human life under the threat of either increasing nuclear activity or over-population or increased consumerism;

iii If appropriate, explore from your own culture something that speaks specifically to the land, e.g. NZ Maori spirituality of the land, or the Vedante's model of the relationship between humanity and nature or relationship with the land and the tradition of the indigenous Indian people of Latin America;

iv Consider whether there are practices in your society that relate to human conception and birth that you want to challenge. How much is human life valued?

(e) Return to whole group for general sharing.

III. Closing Activity (30 min)

Think and decide about what you can do as a group and as individuals to share more fully in God's work of restoring the integrity of creation.

For further Reading and Discussion

Resources:

1. The Ecumenical Review Vol 38 No. 3, July 1986; "Towards a Credible Ecumenical Theology of Nature" pp 322 - 331 - David Gosling

2. God and Creation - Jürgen Moltmann;

3. The Liberation of Life - Charles Birch & John B. Cobb;

4. How to Read the Old Testament - Etienne Charpentier

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JUSTICE, PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

Resource Materials 3.6 [1]

BIBLE STUDY ON JUSTICE

"Worship Without Justice Stinks"
Isaiah 1, 10-17

A True Story

The pastor of a prominent mainline church congregation went to his church on Palm Sunday 1974 to prepare himself for worship. Upon arrival at the church yard, he met a huge man dressed in rags - and drunk on locally produced rum. Several children were chatting to him. The pastor glanced at the man and passed by unconcerned. He hurriedly entered his study and closed the door behind him. A few minutes later the drunkard quietly slipped into the church and sat in the corner of the first pew from the doorway. The congregation gathered gradually and at the appointed time the worship service began with the singing of the hymn

'To God be the glory, great things he hath done.
So loved he the world that He gave His son.
Who yielded His life an atonement for sin
And opened the life gate that all may go in.'

Not very long after the singing of the hymn followed by the opening prayer a police car drove into the church yard. Two police officers entered the church on tip-toe to remove the drunkard from the church. Just then two members of the congregation became concerned and followed the officers as they were going out with the drunkard. One of the members returned with a frown on his face. The pastor stopped the service temporarily and asked what was going on. The member who had followed the officer explained that the police had come to take the man from the church. The pastor requested that the officers and the man be called back inside. It was then that one of the police officers explained that the man was not only a drunkard and a giant but a notorious criminal. So for fear that he would cause a disturbance and perhaps hardm to the worshippers, one of the church leaders had called the police station to send officers to take the man away for the security of the worshippers.

After hearing the explanation, the pastor thanked the officers and asked them to leave the drunkard confident that God would take care of him. The officers agreed and promised to come back if their help was needed.

At that point there were grumblings and murmurings in the congregation in protest at the pastor's decision to have such a man amongst them while they were worshipping God. Nevertheless the pastor turned to the congregation after the officers had left and invited all the members who truly believed in the transforming power of God to come forward and join in praying for the liberation of the drunkard. There was a long period of silence. Then about five members stepped out of the comfortable pews and joined the pastor in prayer for the drunkard who as then standing before the altar in front of the pastor. After the prayer the drunkard asked to say a few words. He said that he had recognised the need for a Saviour who would save his life. That was why he decided to go to that particular church with the hope that there God might have mercy on him. So he was not there to cause a disturbance as some were thinking, but to seek salvation for his life. he closed his statement by singing the Lord's prayer in a tune that was totally unknown to all the congregation. He stayed to the end of the service in silence. Three months later the pastor saw that man completely liberated and was working as a salesman in one of the big stores in that community.

****

1. In this story what character would you be identified with by people who know you well e.g. your family?
   What character would you like to have been if you had been present at this incident? Why?
   What character would you least like to have been
   Why?
   Express how the drunkard felt a)when he was being taken out by the police.
   b) when he was allowed to stay in Church.
   in one of these ways: Miming his feelings, drawing something, choosing (and perhaps singing) a song that reflected his feelings, finding a picture reflecting his mood .

   What parable(s) told by Jesus would fit this incident? Explain how.
   What do you think the leader was thinking about that night before he fell asleep?
   If you were God what would you have said to the leader?

2. Read Isaiah 1, 10-17

   If you were to find this text typed out and left in an envelope addressed to you when you arrived at Church next Sunday, what would you do?
   a) tear it up
   b) put it in the collection plate with a $10 bill
   c) ignore it
   d) take it home and discuss with your wife and family what to do about it
   e) leave the church and never go back there again
   f) give the letter to the pastor and tell him that it was sent to the wrong person
   g) share the letter with your colleagues at work.

3. Two colours are actually mentioned in the text, but thinking of the text as a whole, what colour would you associate with it? Why?

4. What smell would you associate with this passage? Why?

5. In the passage God's judgment is very harsh on some people who are faith ful to regular worship. Did Jesus express the same view at any time? Did Jesus recommend that people should not go to the synagogue or temple? What was His own practice? What does He expect of us?

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Group to whom this Bible Study is addressed

Those Christians for whom religion consists basically in regular worship (individually and communally) and who cannot see the essential relationship between worship and issues of justice.

AIM To show through a Bible Study of Isaiah 1, 10-17 that for Christians true worship cannot be seperated from implementing justice at all levels in our lives.

Biblical and Theological Background

N.B. These notes are for the animator of the Bible Study - for personal reflection in preparation.

There are 3 concepts in this study which need some explanation: justice, worship and being a Christian.

A. Justice

Justice is a "divine attitude". According to the Bible only God is just. For us to act justly means to act as God acts. The closer a person comes to God the more just he or she becomes. To be "just" means to have entered into the "right relationship" with God, with our neighbour, with creation and with ourselves.

The "right relations" we ought to enter are made visible in the convenant that Yahweh made ith his people and are ultimately revealed and fully established in Jesus Christ. Here we enter into a relationship with God that makes us his sons and daughters and consequently constitutes us as brothers and sisters. While the first one is a gracious gift from God that makes us "children of God", the second one we have to regard as a task on our part calling us to become truly brothers and sisters.

Justice for us, who are God's children, means therefore to work and to live out such relations that correspond to the great gift we have received from God by being called into union with Him.

To know who our God is and to realise what we are called to do means to do justice. As the prophet tells us: 'To know me means to do justice'. (Jer. 22,16).

JUSTICE, PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

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Resource Materials 3.6 [1]

BIBLE STUDY: PEACEMAKERS
Matthew 5,9

INTRODUCTION (5 minutes)
Song with the theme of peace (e.g. King of Kings, or Peace is flowing like a river)
Short prayer by leader or participant

Leader: In Matthew 5,9 Jesus says "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God". This saying forms part of the Beatitudes which introduce Jesus' sermon on the mount. In the Beatitudes Jesus tells us the basic Christian attitudes and actions which bring true happiness or blessing - poverty, mourning, meekness, hunger for righteousness, mercy, integrity, and now, peace making. In this bible study we are going to look more closely at what Jesus means by peacemaking, and how we can be peacemakers in our own situations.

1. WHAT DOES JESUS MEAN BY PEACE IN THIS PASSAGE? (20 minutes)

Participants: Brainstorm on what they think Jesus means by peace. Leader writes ideas up on the blackboard or newsprint.

An alternative to brainstorming would be to give each participant a piece of paper with the word 'peace' written on it in their own language and ask them to draw a picture or show an object which expresses what peace means to them. They then share with the group in one sentence what this image of peace means to them.

Leader: Sorts the words on the blackboard into categories of individual, communal and religious peace and shows how these correspond to the different aspects of SHALOM, which were probably in Jesus' mind when he used the word peace, as part of his Jewish

background. (Simple symbols for each category, drawm alongside the brainstorm words, might be helpful in clarifying the groupings.)

The idea of shalom as individual (peace within a person and between persons) and communal (within a nation and between nations) is further explored with the help of Micah 4, 1-4 (the participants will need the passage in front of them, and one might read it alound). Shalon as religious peace (salvation, reconciliation with God, peace within the Church and between faiths) is further explored with the help of Isaiah 58, 9b-12. (The leader should draw attention to the holistic ;material/ physical as well as spiritual aspects of shalom shown in these passages.)

2. SONS OF GOD (20 minutes)

Leader — Jesus tells us that creating peace, shalom, will make us sons of God. Being a son of God means sharing and reflecting the character and work of the Father. Jesus is the Son of God, so he can show us, in his character and work, what kind of peace-making will make us also sons of God.

Participants — General discussion on the question

What does Jesus show us about peacemaking?

Leader — summarizes the discussion and adds any points which have not been mentioned so that all the following aspects are included:

Peacemaking is proclaiming the Kingdom (Matt. 10.12-24)
The source of peace is Jesus (John 16.33)
Peace is his gift to his disciples (John 14.27)
Jesus commands peace between his disciples (Mark 9.50)
Forgiveness and healing create peace (Luke 7.50; Mark 5.34)
Peace making can be divisive (Matt. 10.34 etc.)
It involves suffering (John 20)
It may be rejected (Matt 10.12-24)
Peace making is part of Jesus' command to mission (John 20.21)
It is not the world's idea of peace (John 14.27).

Being sons of God (that is, peacemakers) involves
social and economic justice (Matt 25)
Revenge and peacemaking are incompatible (Luke 9.54-55)
Peacemaking is an urgent imperative (Matt 10.12-24)
(and other examples the leader can bring from his/her own study of the gospels, or that the participants find).

3. THE PARTICIPANTS AS PEACEMAKERS (30 minutes)

Leader — gives out a decision sheet (see below) to each participant and explains how they should be used.

Participants discuss in pairs the question

What can I learn from Jesus about peacemaking in my own

local, national or church community?

The participants write down their discoveries on the decision sheet. They then share their discoveries with the whole group.

Finally, each participant decides on one definite action which they commit themselves to take in order to help make peace in their local, national or church community.

(The headings on the decision sheet can be written up on the blackboard so that people can write them into their own notebooks or on a piece of paper, if copying facilities are not available).

Participants who wish to do so, can read out their decision to the group.

Leader ends with prayer for peace and for the participants as peacemakers (or asks one or more of the participants to pray).

HEADINGS FOR THE DECISION SHEET:

1. In my local, church and national situation, I can learn from Jesus the following ways of helping to make peace.

2. I commit myself to take the following action to help make peace in my local community, or church community, or national community (ONE practical action only):

This Bible Study is intended for a mixed (sexes, ages, church affiliation) group of adult Christians.

Equipment needed: each participant should have a bible, a pen, and paper or notebook if copying facilities are not available.
Blackboard and chalk (or newsprint and kokis).

B. Worship

True worship means that we celebrate, acknowledge and proclaim publicly who our God is, and we give thanks and praise for what He has done for us (Eph. 1,3-14; Rom 8,13-16). In worship we live out our being sons and daughters of God and we present our new relationship towards each other by proclaiming that we are truly brothers and sisters. The problem that easily arises between justice and worship consists in the constant temptation that we may celebrate and proclaim with great solemnity and elaborations God's gracious gift to us, but forget (consciously or unconsciously) that we in reality possess this great gift only if we actively engage in creating such relations which correspond to this gift by making ourselves truly brothers and sisters.

Worship then turns into a cover-up operation of our neglect of true justice and becomes an insult to God and His gift to us.

This is the background of our Biblical text Is. 1, 10-17.

Some people in Israel had become rich and powerful by disregarding the covenant laws which guaranteed a basic equality for everyone in the community. Worship was used to gloss over the prevailing unjust situations. By donating lavishly to worship services and religious festivities people thought they could appease Yahweh in their neglect of the fundamental demand of the covenant, namely justice, the establishment of 'right relation'. Worship had become a cop-out for doing justice. Yahweh's response was: "Your worship stinks and I cannot stand it anymore."

C Being a Christian

Jesus stood in the tradition of the great prophets (Lk. 4,16-18; Mt. 11,1-5). His message was to proclaim that God is 'Abba' and that we are all brothers and sisters. He came to make the covenant a final reality for all human beings.

Jesus' words and actions aim at breaking down all walls of discrimination between righteous and sinner, Jews and gentiles, men and women (Jn. 4).

He comes to bring about the true community of justice where the 'right relations' are beginning to take shape, where all will truly be brothers and sisters.

Jesus was a man of intensive prayer and He had no difficulty with communal prayer (Lk. 4,16) but like the prophets he castigated and condemned every law and every structure that put walls between people and discriminates against them (Mt. 23). He put love of neighbour over worship (Mt. 12, 3-14) and repeated the protest of Yahweh by the prophets in saying 'Justice I want, not your sacrifices'.

A Christian is one who 'follows the Lord', who makes Jesus' actions and behaviour his rule of life. The disciple's concern is to do away with discrimination and he works for the 'right relationship' between people. He or she comes before God to celebrate the new relationship he or she has been given by becoming a child of God and shows that he or she has really accepted this gracious gift since for him or her everyone has become his or her brother

or sister. Justice, the creation of right relations, has become the basis for his or her worship.

Material prepared by John Russell, John Fullenbach, Trevor Dean

Criticism of this Bible Study by the Justice Group

1. Its stress is on individual justice, does not address social issues, structures.

2. Biblical and theological background 'gives the answer', encourages animators to bring participants to these positions rather than let them articulate ideas themselves.

3. The introductory story is a striking one - is too much attention focussed on this rather than the story focussing attention on the text itself?

4. Does the story satisfactorily bring out the theme that true worship cannot be separated from justice at all levels in our lives?

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1. Are these criticisms valid?

2. If they are how would you modify the Bible Study to make it more satisfactory?

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Life and Peace Review

Perspectives on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation

Issue 1/1988

Life and Peace Review, the magazine of the Christian peace research centre, the Life & Peace Institute, Uppsala, Sweden, has produced a special issue with an emphasis on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation. The Review, which appears quarterly, focusses on the peace and justice work of the churches. It also seeks to provide up-to-date and detailed comment on developments in peace research and peace movements.

The current issue (1/1988) contains articles on the following subjects which are of relevance to those concerned with the JPIC process:

* JPIC: Current information and comment from JPIC Director, Dr. Preman Niles (Sri Lanka).

* Disarmament: Hopes and Expectations, a feature article with comments in the light of the INF agreement from prominent Christians from different world regions

  Clement John (Christian Conference of Asia)

  Emilio Castro (WCC General Secretary)

  Bishop Karoly Toth (Hungary)

* Africa: An interview with Rev. Jose Chipenda (General Secretary, All Africa Conference of Churches) on the peace and justice concerns of Africa's churches.

* Central America: A specially commissioned article from the Communications Officer of the Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI), Carlos Kunde.

* Six Nation Peace Initiative (Argentina, Greece, India, Mexico, Sweden, Tanzania). Eye-witness account and analysis of the meeting of heads of state in Stockholm, January 1988 by LPR Disarmament Researcher Luc de Smet.

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* News and Views including reports on:

- European Convocation "Peace with Justice" (CEC/CCEE, Basel, May 1989)
- Kyoto Conference of Christian Lay Academies
- Southern African/ Nordic Churches meeting (February 1988)
- Nuclear Free Pacific Campaign
- WCC visit to the Marshall Islands

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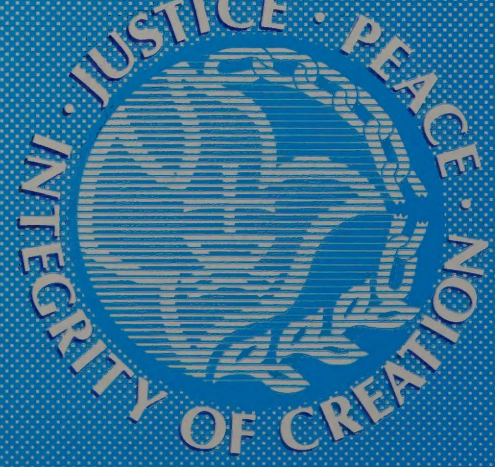

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